NEW

RICHARD III
& THE PLANTAGENETS

THE STORY OF ENGLAND'S MOST DIVIDED DYNASTY

350 YEARS
of mystery, malice and murder in Britain and beyond

PRINCES IN THE TOWER ◆ WARS OF THE ROSES ◆ THE MAGNA CARTA

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FUTURE

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Welcome to

RICHARD III
& THE PLANTAGENETS

Born out of anarchy, the House of Plantagenet would end in civil war. In between, the dynasty was plagued by madness, embroiled in battles and divided down the middle into the Houses of York and Lancaster – the two players in the bloody Wars of the Roses. In Richard III & the Plantagenets, discover the kings and queens who fought to keep the crown in the family for over 300 years and meet the ones who died trying. Explore the Crusading monarchs and those who thought the throne of France was their birthright. Uncover Mad King Henry VI and find out how he triggered the clash between the red and white roses that would change England forever. At Bosworth in 1485 a new dynasty emerged, and the Tudors would do anything they could to keep the Plantagenets from returning.

FUTURE

RICHARD III
& THE PLANTAGENETS

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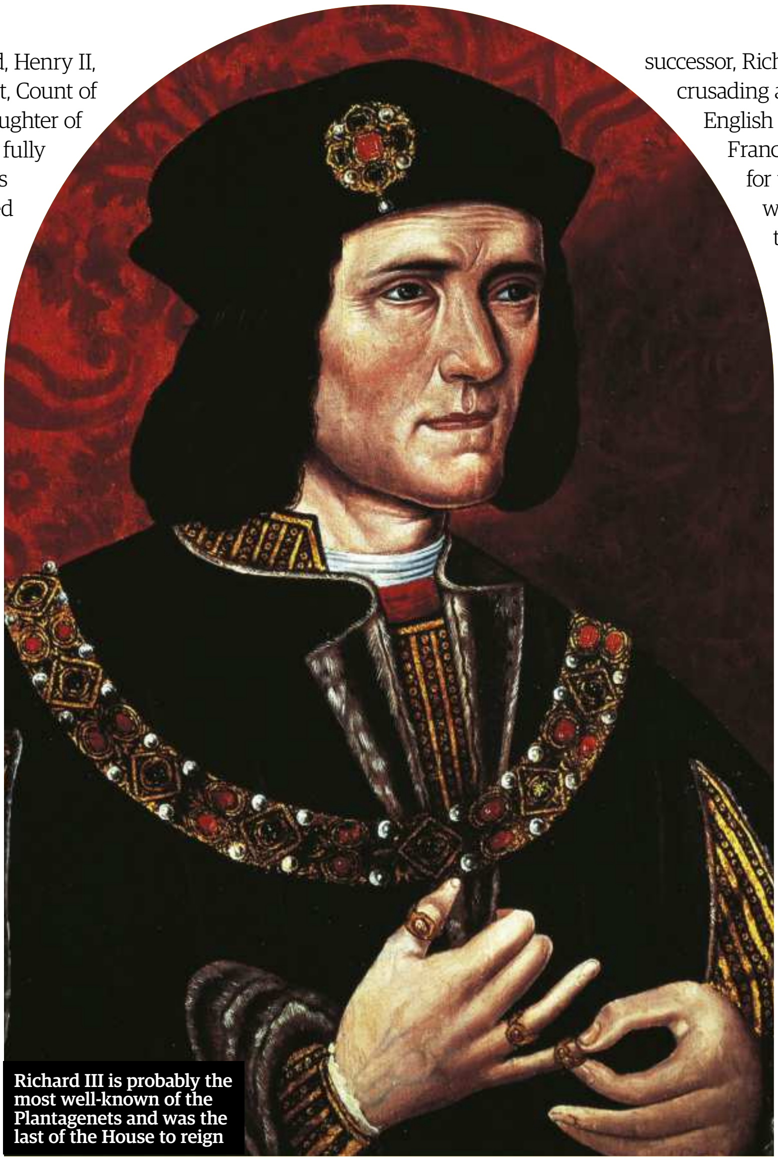
1154-1485

The House of Plantagenet

The House of Plantagenet enjoyed a tumultuous reign that lasted three centuries, but what was the story of their rise and fall?



Richard III is probably the most well-known of the Plantagenets and was the last of the House to reign

The first Plantagenet king of England, Henry II, was the son of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, and his wife, Matilda, the daughter of Henry I of England. Though Henry fully expected to inherit his grandfather's English crown, when the English king died it was his nephew, Stephen, who seized power. The result was a civil war that dragged on for more than a decade, as the Angevins battled Stephen's House of Blois for the rule of England. Young Henry was just nine years old when he joined the military campaign and eventually, as the years wore on, conflict gave way to diplomacy and, eventually, accord.

In return for an end to hostilities, Stephen agreed to name Henry as his rightful heir and the men sealed their agreement with a kiss in Winchester Cathedral in 1153. The following year, Stephen died and Henry II went on to become one of the most powerful rulers Europe had ever seen. With his additional titles of duke of Normandy and count of Anjou, he commanded territories on both sides of the Channel and though Scotland remained outside his grasp, an alliance with Pope Adrian IV later saw Ireland added to Henry's already vast estates.

From the very beginning of their reign in England, the Angevins were ambitious and expansionist. Yet the family was riddled with infighting and thanks to the Crusades and their interests in France, the Angevin kings were frequently absent. Henry's successor, Richard I (aka Lionheart), was captured while crusading and his brother, John, seized control of his English territories with the support of Philip II of France. Ultimately Richard forgave his brother for this betrayal and when the king died without an heir, it was John who became the last Angevin king of England.

John's Plantagenet successor was his son, Henry III. At just nine years old he inherited a crown with vastly reduced powers and a nation in turmoil, while the once mighty Angevin Empire was a mere memory. Though John had agreed to the Magna Carta, he had steadfastly refused to honour its terms. As a result, the Barons' War was raging and with the support of rebellious English nobles, the future Louis VIII of France was besieging England. William Marshall, Henry III's respected regent, managed to turn the tide in favour of the young king and, over time, peace was once again restored.

The Plantagenet era was a time of conflict. From the beginning of his reign in 1272, Edward I was determined to build a mighty empire. He conquered Wales, naming his son as the first-ever Prince of Wales, and attempted to take Scotland too, but found his efforts frustrated. His successor, Edward II, likewise tried and failed to conquer Scotland and his reign ended ignominiously when he abdicated in favour of his French wife, Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. Four years later, Edward and Isabella's son, Edward III, captured the crown.

The reigns of the Plantagenets were marked by tumultuous relations with the French, never more so than when Edward III presided over the start of the Hundred Years' War, battling the House of Valois for the crown of France. Once the possessors of vast French territories, Plantagenet interests had long since diminished, but they believed themselves to the rightful rulers of the country. This belief was not pursued in earnest until the French king, Philip VI, declared his support for the Scots, threatening to remove the last French territories of the Plantagenets if Edward III didn't abandon his efforts to take control of Scotland. Edward refused and in return proclaimed himself rightful king of France, a crown he intended to seize by force.

By the time the French claimed a decisive victory, England was struggling with the long-term cost of conflict. Edward III's successor and grandson, Richard II, was the last direct Plantagenet king of England and when he died, power passed into the hands of the House of Lancaster, one of two cadet branches of the house. The other was, of course, York.

Henry IV, V and VI all came from the House of Lancaster, but in 1455 the Wars of the Roses brought an end to their long-standing dominance. At the head of both Houses were descendants of Edward III and both believed themselves to be the rightful ruling family. Fighting under the banner of the red rose, Lancastrian forces clashed with the Yorkists, who took a white rose as their symbol. Ultimately, it was the House of York who claimed the interim victory, placing Edward IV on the throne for the next two decades.

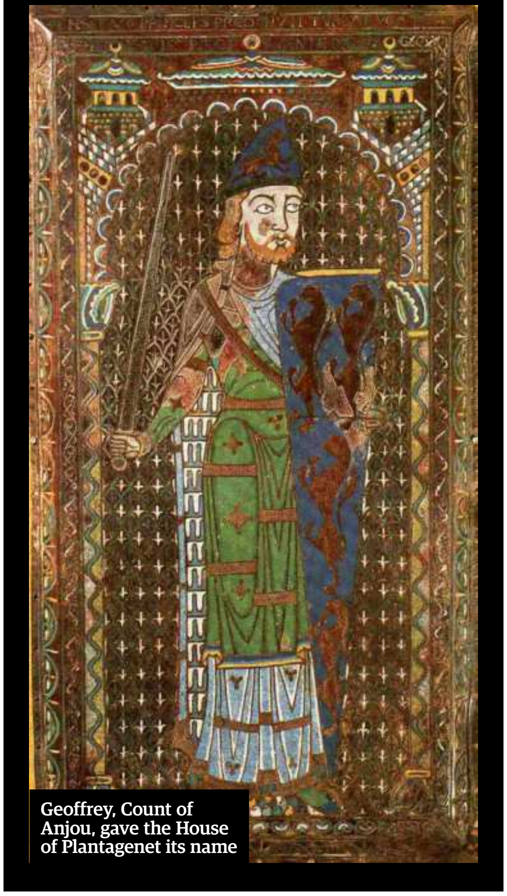
With Edward's death, the Roses went to war again, but when Richard III died at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, the ambitions of the House of York died with him. As the Plantagenet era faded into memory, Henry VII, the first king of the House of Tudor, inherited the crown.

What's in a Plantagenet name?

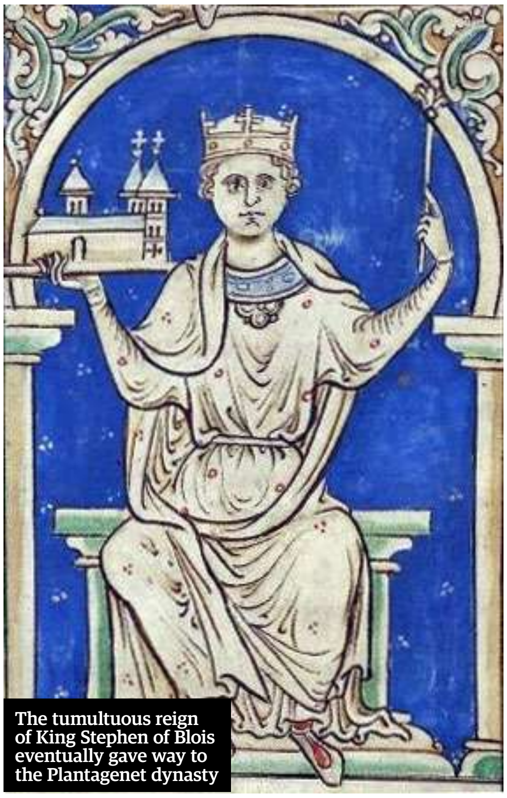
The Plantagenet name is legendary, but where did it come from?

In the 12th century, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, and father of the future Henry II of England, was known by the nickname 'Plante Genest'. Two explanations have been advanced for this unusual soubriquet, with the first being that he wore a sprig of broom (called planta genista), in his hat. The second is that he planted thick broom to better hide him during hunts.

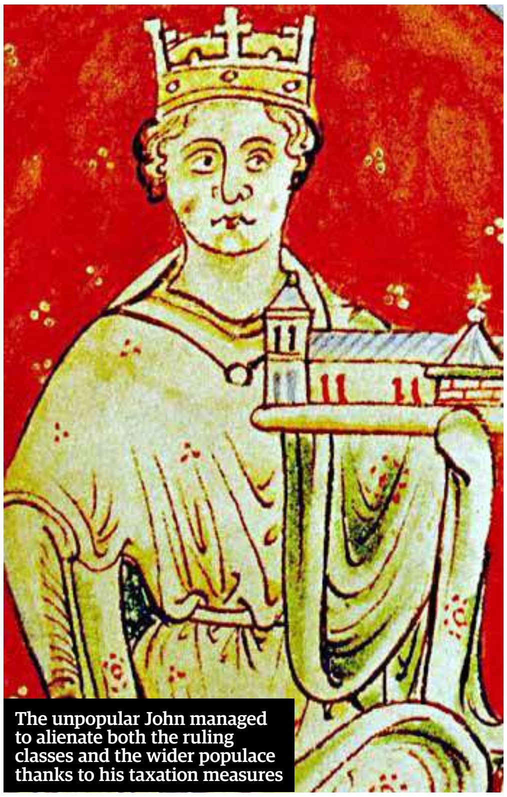
When Richard of York, 3rd Duke of York, wished to emphasise his status as Geoffrey's rightful heir in the 15th century, he adapted the nickname to Plantagenet and made it his family name. As the years passed it became used as a blanket term for all of Geoffrey's descendants, beginning with the House of Angevin.



Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, gave the House of Plantagenet its name



The tumultuous reign of King Stephen of Blois eventually gave way to the Plantagenet dynasty



The unpopular John managed to alienate both the ruling classes and the wider populace thanks to his taxation measures

Henry II was the first Plantagenet king of England

© Adam Bishop

> "The following year, Stephen died and Henry II went on to become one of the most powerful rulers Europe had ever seen"

THE ANGEVINS

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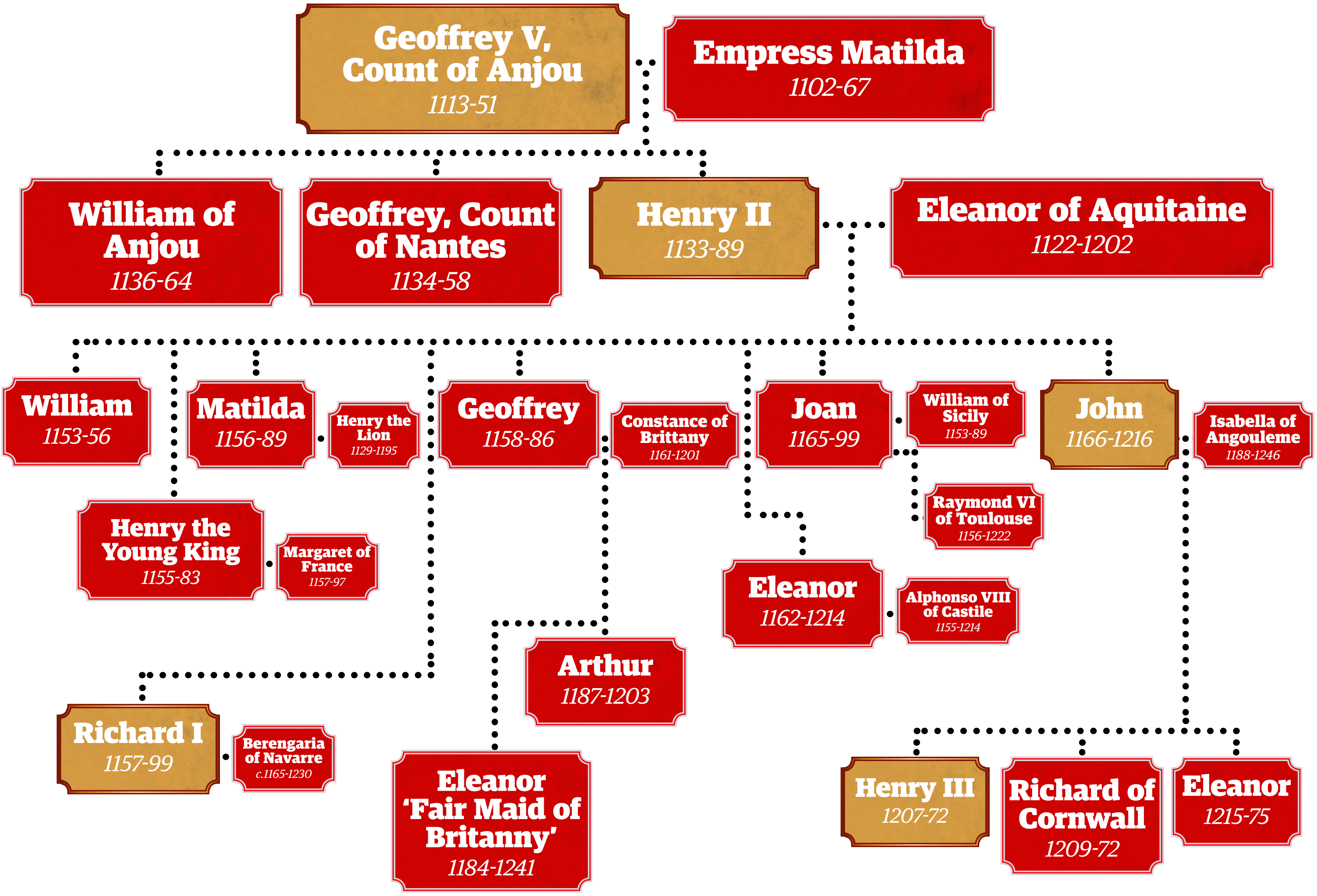
Coming to England from France, the Angevins came to rule after a civil war nearly tore the country apart


Geoffrey V, Count of Anjou
1113-51
Empress Matilda
1102-67
William of Anjou
1136-64
Geoffrey, Count of Nantes
1134-58
Henry II
1133-89
Eleanor of Aquitaine
1122-1202
William
1153-56
Matilda
1156-89
Henry the Lion
1129-1195
Geoffrey
1158-86
Constance of Brittany
1161-1201
Joan
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William of Sicily
1153-89
John
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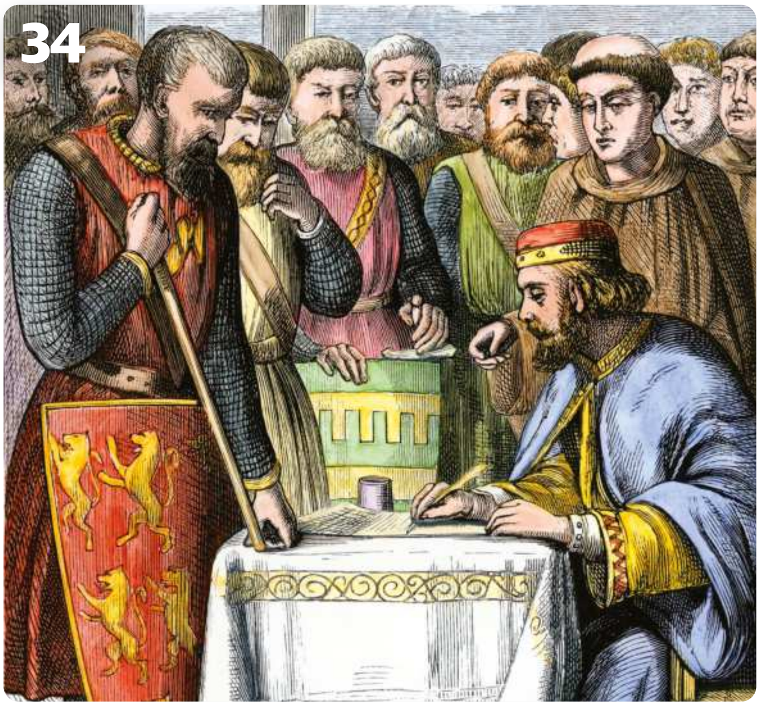
1188-1246
Raymond VI of Toulouse
1156-1222
Henry the Young King
1155-83
Margaret of France
1157-97
Eleanor
1162-1214
Alphonso VIII of Castile
1155-1214
Arthur
1187-1203
Richard I
1157-99
Berengaria of Navarre
c.1165-1230
Eleanor 'Fair Maid of Britanny'
1184-1241
Henry III
1207-72
Richard of Cornwall
1209-72
Eleanor
1215-75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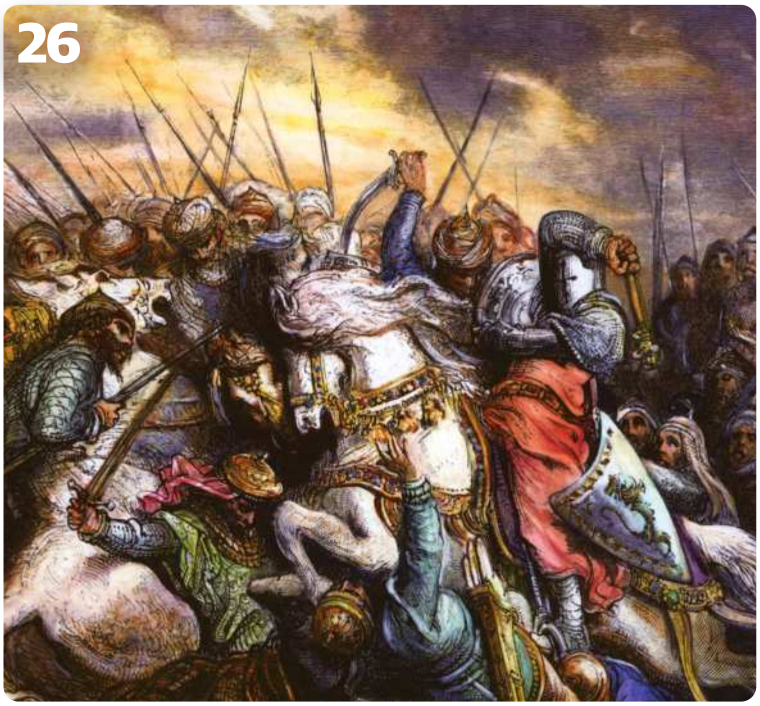
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Henry in effigy (who is alongside Eleanor of Aquitaine) at Fontevraud Abbey

1133-89

Henry II

Out of the chaos of civil war, the first Plantagenet king forged an empire that became the envy of rulers across Europe

Written by Jon Wright

In 1128, Geoffrey Plantagenet, the future count of Anjou, seemed to be a perfectly respectable match for Matilda, the daughter of Henry I of England. The couple's first son, Henry, arrived in 1133 and, on one reckoning, the succession was secure. Unfortunately, when Henry I died in December 1135 there was much grumbling about the prospect of a woman (Matilda) or an Angevin (Geoffrey) seizing the reins of power: their child, Henry, was not yet two years old. Many eyes turned to a rival candidate, Henry I's nephew Stephen, and before too long the nation had descended into civil war.

> One of the most notable acts initiated by Henry II was the Assize of Clarendon in 1166, which transformed English law

From 1139, Matilda spent nine years attempting to wrest the crown from Stephen. She encountered little success, but across the English Channel Geoffrey made excellent headway in Normandy, securing the ducal title in 1144. This provided sufficient morale for the couple's English followers to remain loyal until young Henry came of age. He turned 16 in 1149, was swiftly installed as duke of Normandy, and everything now hinged on the unpredictable response of the French king, Louis VII.

At first, Louis favoured Stephen's cause and joined with Stephen's son, Eustace (also the husband of Louis' sister), in an attack on Normandy. Realpolitik won the day, however: the prospect of facing a joint Norman-Angevin army did not appeal. Louis was soon negotiating with Henry and Geoffrey, and accepting homage from the former in his role as ruler of Normandy. An invasion of England might well have been launched at this point, but Geoffrey died in September 1151 and Henry, suddenly finding himself in the inherited role of count of Anjou, Touraine and Maine, now had waters to calm in southern France.

Meanwhile, back in England, Stephen's popularity, such as it was, had plummeted. In March 1152, he demanded that the kingdom's bishops approve the anointing of his son, Eustace, as his heir. Every one of them refused. Henry's prospects could hardly have been brighter at this point, but he then made a hazardous marital decision. Louis VII had recently secured the annulment of his unhappy marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine and, within two months of the separation, Eleanor had been betrothed to Henry. Louis took this, not unreasonably, as a slight and gladly joined another coalition against Henry, which also included Eustace and Henry's brother Geoffrey.

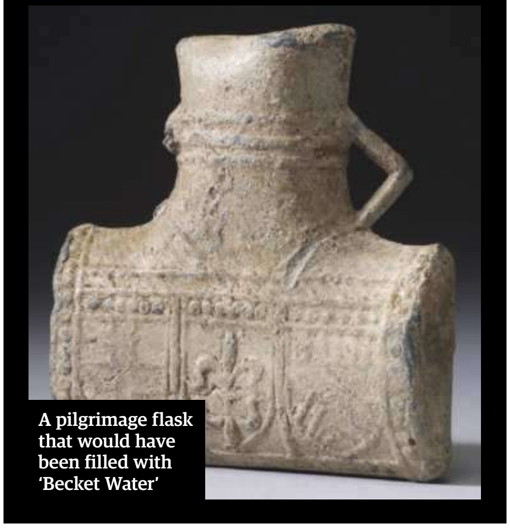
Henry once more prevailed and in January 1153 he set sail for England, and a showdown to determine the country's future seemed likely. As it happened, many supporters in both camps were not overly keen on a defining battle and a truce was arranged. Stephen headed for his power base in London; Henry

Making a saint

Thomas Becket enjoyed a remarkable posthumous journey in which the worldly politician was transformed into a heroic saint and martyr

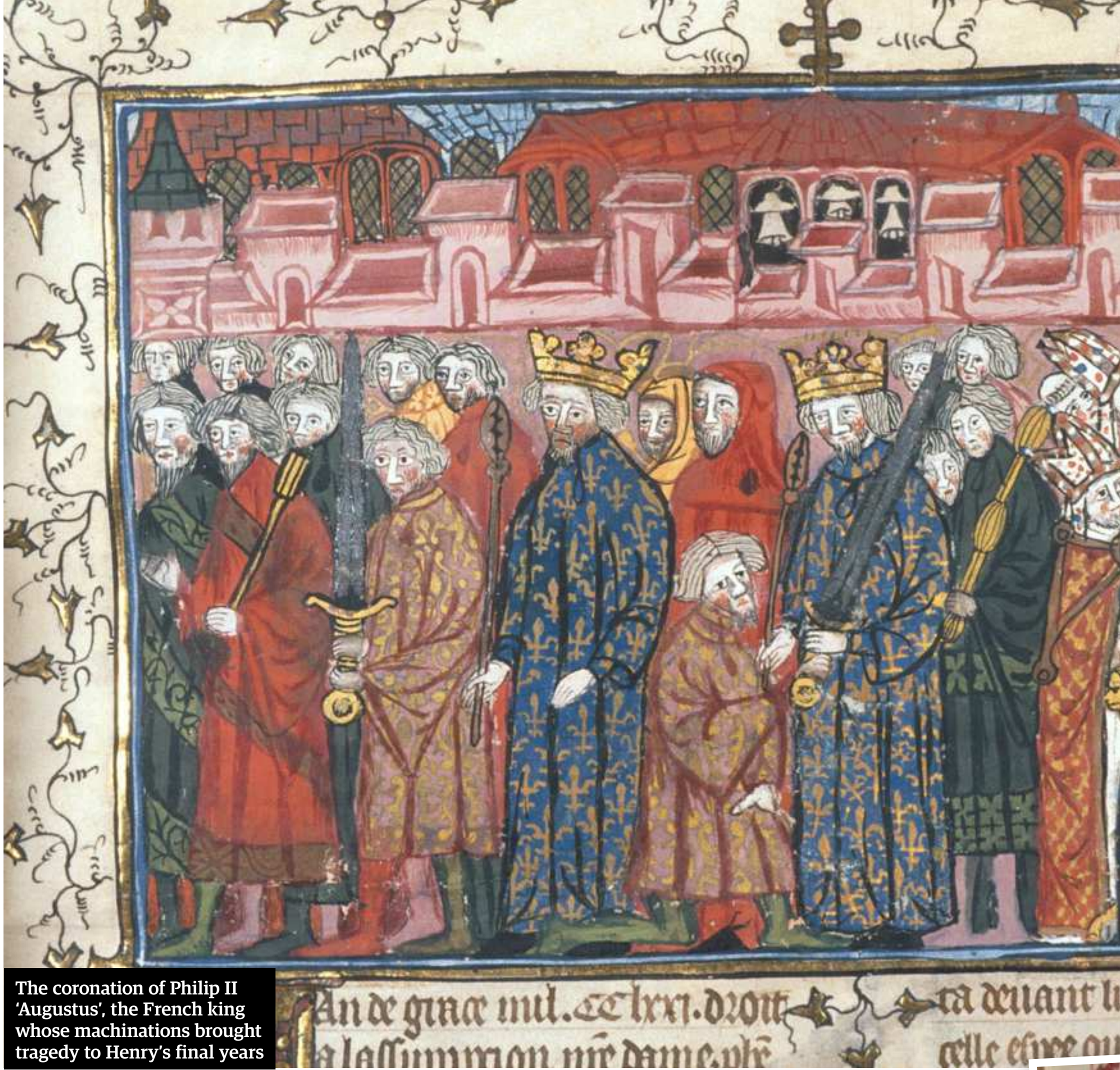
In life, Thomas Becket was not averse to the trappings of power. During one trip to France in 1157, monkeys on horseback carried luggage crammed with expensive silks and furs, and 12 horses were required to transport Becket's silver and plate. In death, Becket became the hair-shirt-wearing ascetic and the martyr: the seal of the archbishops of Canterbury would carry an image of Becket's murder until the 16th century. Within three years of his death, Becket had been canonised and, by this time, stories of miracles associated with his intervention had become commonplace. Vials of 'Saint Thomas Water,' supposedly containing droplets of Becket's blood, were snapped up by pilgrims to Canterbury.

In 1220, Becket's remains were translated to a new, opulent shrine, which would draw huge crowds until its destruction under Henry VIII. Churches across Europe were rededicated to Becket, stained glass windows portrayed his deeds, and he became a particularly popular patron saint: of coopers in Venice, law students in Bologna, and brewers in London. Henry II, meanwhile, turned scandal into advantage. By performing regular penances and promoting devotion to Becket, he managed to associate his dynasty with Europe's most doted-upon saint.



A pilgrimage flask that would have been filled with 'Becket Water'

began to rally support in the provinces. It became increasingly clear that some kind of compromise was required. In one of the great anti-climaxes of English history, it was agreed that Stephen would remain king for life and that Henry would succeed him. The decision had been made considerably easier for Stephen by the death of Eustace a few months earlier and the terms of the agreement also ensured that Stephen's second son, William, was well compensated with lands and riches. The situation was still precarious and there was no way of knowing whether Stephen would honour his promises, but his death in October 1154 allowed Henry to succeed, unchallenged, to the English throne in December.



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The coronation of Philip II 'Augustus', the French king whose machinations brought tragedy to Henry's final years

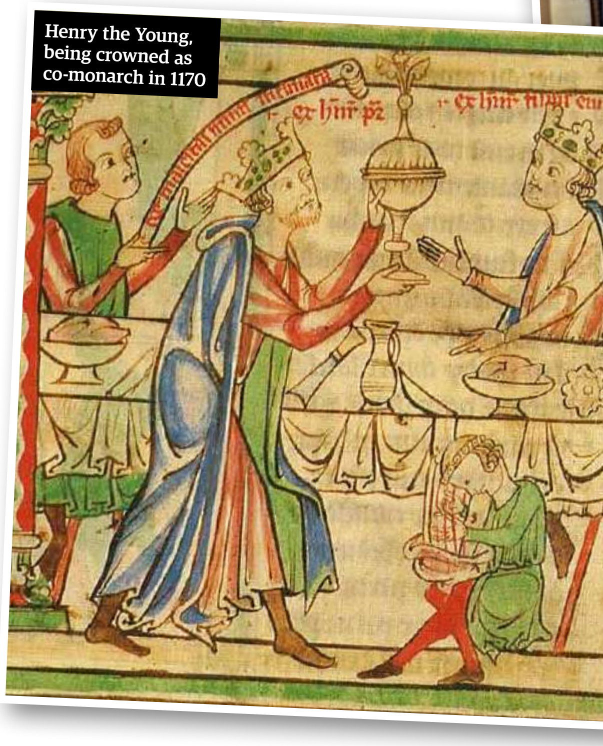
> "Henry set about demolishing castles that had been illegally erected during the civil wars and embarked upon building projects of his own"

He also found himself as ruler of vast territories in France: from Normandy in the north to Anjou and Aquitaine in the south. He was, by any measure, one of the mightiest rulers in Christendom.

Barons and bothersome bishops

Henry's first (and abiding) task was to restore some semblance of order after years of civil discord. He acquitted himself well. If lofty subjects behaved themselves, they were rewarded or at least left in peace. Dissent was not to be tolerated, however, and Henry set about demolishing castles that had been illegally erected during the civil wars and embarked upon many building projects of his own: fortresses would spring up, or be greatly strengthened, in, among other places, Scarborough, Dover, Newcastle and Nottingham. Efforts were also made to try and improve the royal finances and to codify England's legal practices.

Ruling over such extensive territories brought prestige but also, throughout the reign, a series of troublesome conflicts and challenges. We gain a sense of the international complexion of Henry's kingship by analysing his movements. Between 1154 and 1189 he would spend 37 per cent of his time in England, 43 per cent in Normandy, and 40 per cent in his other French domains. The threat of localised resistance and rebellion was rarely far from Henry's mind. In 1155-56, his brother Geoffrey sought greater influence in Anjou (a revolt that was quickly snuffed out) and, over three decades, Raymond, Count of Toulouse would repeatedly demonstrate his independent spirit. For all this, Henry found time to



Henry the Young, being crowned as co-monarch in 1170

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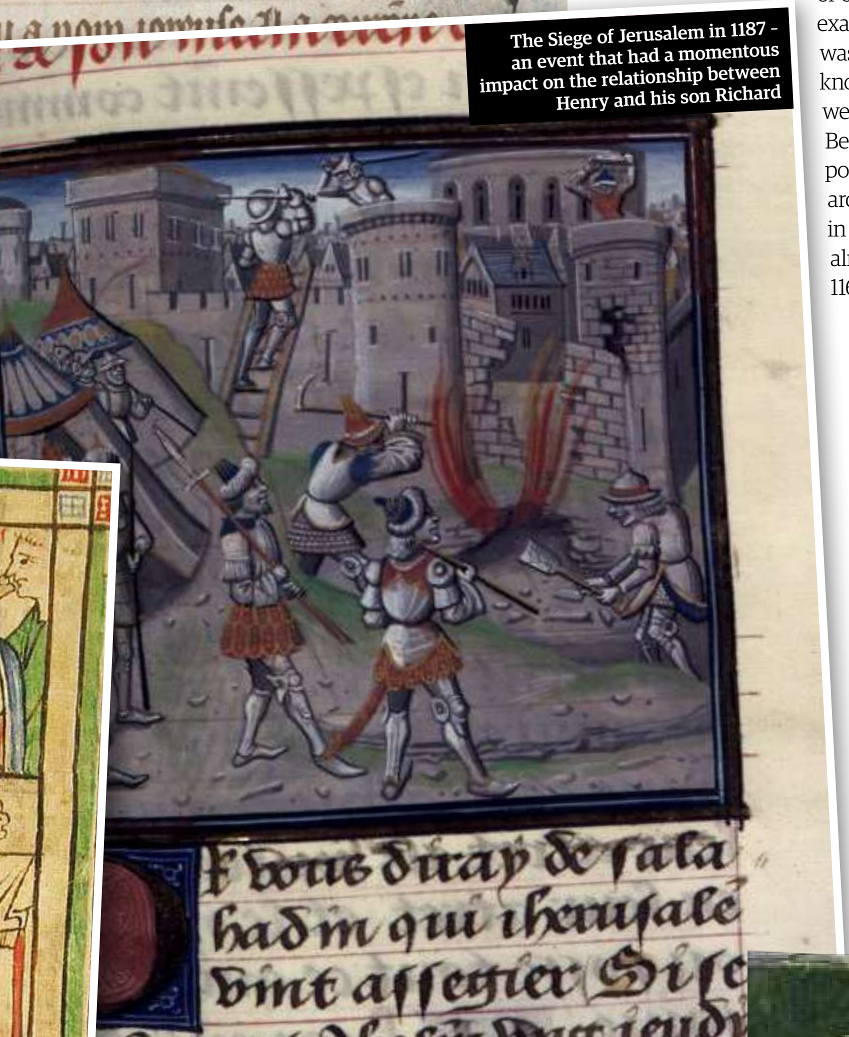
embark upon expansionist endeavours. Incursions into Wales met with limited success, but significant gains were made in Scotland. Early on, Henry reclaimed lands opportunistically taken by the Scots during the conflict between Matilda and Stephen, and the old border, stretching from the Tweed to the Solway, was re-established. Better yet, Scotland's involvement in the 1173-74 rebellion of Henry the Young King allowed Henry to take punitive measures and England was able to establish garrisons as far north as Sterling. In addition, Henry pursued an aggressive policy in Ireland, notably in the campaign of 1171-72, that would help define the course of Anglo-Irish relations for centuries: English kings would now claim to be lords of Ireland.

When it came to appointing key personnel, Henry was usually an excellent judge of capability and character and, even at the start of the reign, was not above employing those (such as Richard de Lucy) who had earlier fought against him. One of his appointees did, however, prove to be an especially irksome thorn in the royal side. His name was Thomas Becket.

One contemporary remarked of Henry and Becket's early relationship that "never in the whole epoch of Christian history were two men more of one mind". This was an exaggeration and Becket was always expected to know his place. Still, the pair were on friendly terms and Becket progressed from his position as chancellor to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1162. Tensions emerged almost immediately. At the 1163 council at Woodstock, Becket protested against some of Henry's planned financial reforms and this, while a relatively minor issue, demonstrated that Becket was not going to blithely comply with all of Henry's policies. His role model as archbishop was his predecessor Anselm, who had famously given William II and Henry I so many political headaches.

A range of conflicts deepened the rift between Henry and Becket over the coming years: over the archbishop's right to excommunicate without the king's permission, the process of making appeals directly to the pope, the king's right to deal with criminal clerics, and the always-sensitive topic of appointing senior members of the clergy. The fundamental relationship between Church and state was at stake though, and behind the weighty issues, a rather unseemly game of tit-for-tat developed. Henry took over lands and castles belonging to Canterbury. Becket opposed the marriage of Henry's brother, William, because the proposed bride was a distant cousin. When William died in January 1164 (of a broken heart, so it was claimed), Henry blamed his archbishop. Matters came to a head at a council in Northampton in the autumn of 1164, where Becket's financial affairs during his spell as chancellor were scrutinised. By early November, Becket was heading into exile on the Continent.

Much angry rhetoric filled the remainder of the decade but healing the breach was in everyone's interests. In July 1170, a reconciliation of sorts was hammered out. Becket returned to England in December, but petulance



The Siege of Jerusalem in 1187 – an event that had a momentous impact on the relationship between Henry and his son Richard

The keep at Scarborough Castle, one of Henry's many military building projects and political manoeuvring were not so easily set aside. Henry made no significant moves to restore lands he had seized, while Becket announced that he would be excommunicating some of his English enemies. He was also furious that the archbishop of York had presided at the coronation of Henry's son as co-monarch: a dignity that should have been granted to England's senior cleric. Henry's patience was exhausted and he wondered aloud if it was right for his followers to "let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born cleric". This was likely just a fit of pique, but four knights took a hint that was never really dropped, headed to Canterbury, and murdered Becket on 29 December 1170.

The assassination provoked uproar across Europe. For one contemporary it exceeded "all the tyranny of Nero… and even the sacrilegious treachery of Judas" and, for a while, there was a real risk that Henry might be excommunicated. By 1172, however, the storm had largely passed. Henry insisted that he had not wished to see Becket killed, but accepted a share of responsibility for the tragic events. He made public penances at Canterbury and assured the pope that his authority would be respected. Not that Henry truly backed down from his vision of Church-state affairs. When monks at Winchester were due to appoint a new leader of their priory in 1173, the king gave the impression of respecting their autonomy: "I order you to hold a free election." He did, though, add a rather significant caveat: "I forbid you to elect anyone except Richard, my clerk."

Family affairs

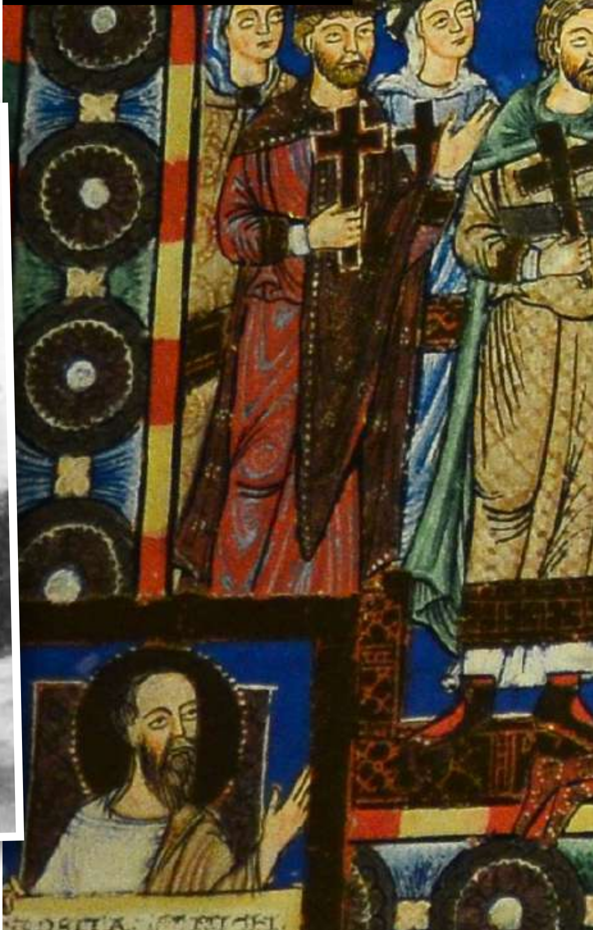
Through these years, rivalries within his family added to Henry's woes. In 1170, it was decided to crown the king's son, Henry the Young, as co-ruler. This was an unusual manoeuvre (not witnessed in England since 787) and Henry's son grew increasingly impatient when denied a meaningful role in government. Spurred on by his mother Eleanor and the French king, Louis VII, he led an open rebellion in 1173-74.

Determining which of his sons (Henry, Richard, Geoffrey and John) should wield influence in the various parts of the empire – and how that inheritance should be divided after the king's death – remained a delicate task for the remainder of the reign. Throughout the 1180s, squabbles, which sometimes escalated into revolt and military conflict, plagued Brittany, Anjou, Normandy and Aquitaine. French monarchs (Louis VII and, especially, his successor, Philip II 'Augustus') were only too happy to fan the flames of discord or launch military adventures of their own.

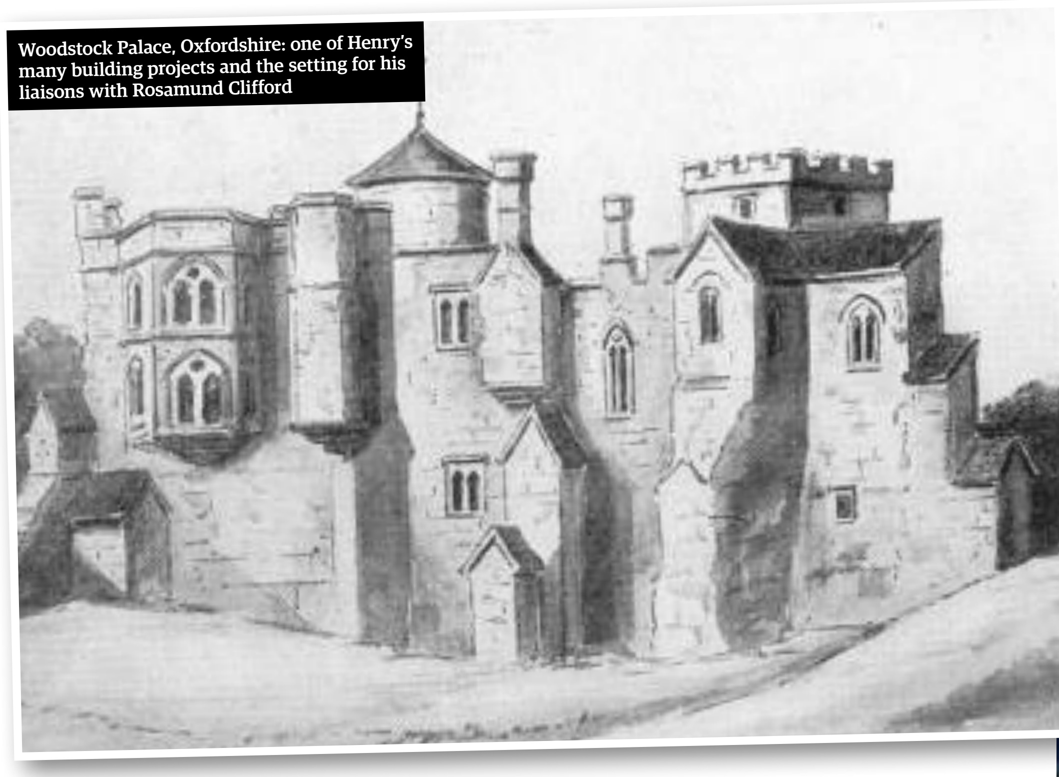
The death of some of these sons (Henry the Young in 1183; Geoffrey in 1186) made dynastic problems a little less complicated, but Richard's unquenchable ambition produced chaos during Henry's final years. Richard was determined to secure the entirety of the Angevin inheritance for himself; Henry saw sense in Aquitaine being passed on to his son John. In the end, Richard took dramatic action, which Henry, with some justification, perceived as betrayal. In the wake of revolt in Aquitaine, a peace conference was held in 1188. Philip II proposed the marriage of his daughter, Alice, to Richard and suggested that all the English and Angevin barons in attendance should swear loyalty to Richard. Richard then publicly asked Henry to recognise him as the heir to all his territories. The king, unwilling to be strong-armed in such a fashion, decided to remain silent. Richard, with astonishing audacity, then knelt before Philip and offered him homage for Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine.

Such provocative behaviour could only end badly. Richard was eager to join the crusade in the wake of the recent fall of Jerusalem, but felt unable to take up the cross until his succession was secure and, before too long, the troops of Richard and Philip were attacking Henry's castles in France. In June 1189, fire engulfed the city of Le Mans and Henry managed to only narrowly escape with his life. In July, a deeply ill Henry was obliged to make a humiliating settlement. Richard was to be formally recognised, though the king is said to have whispered ominous words to his errant son: "God grant that I may not die until I have my revenge on you."

The almighty had other plans and, within a few days, Henry had succumbed to his illness. The chronicler Gerald of Wales found a lesson in the king's passing. He quoted lines from Horace – "pale death strikes the shacks of paupers and the towers of kings with the same foot" – and noted that "at the end [Henry] was without ring, sceptre, crown and nearly everything which is fitting for royal funeral rites". The body was taken to the abbey at Fontevraud and, as Gerald recounts, Richard eventually put in an appearance. "Without growling of flesh and horror before the body", he "dropped to his knees in prayer" but "remained for scarcely an hour". A final signal of the late king's displeasure was glimpsed "as soon as [Richard] entered the church", when "both of the king's nostrils emitted drops of blood". The man who "did not hesitate to disturb almost half Christendom" was dead, and his unruly son would soon claim all the spoils.

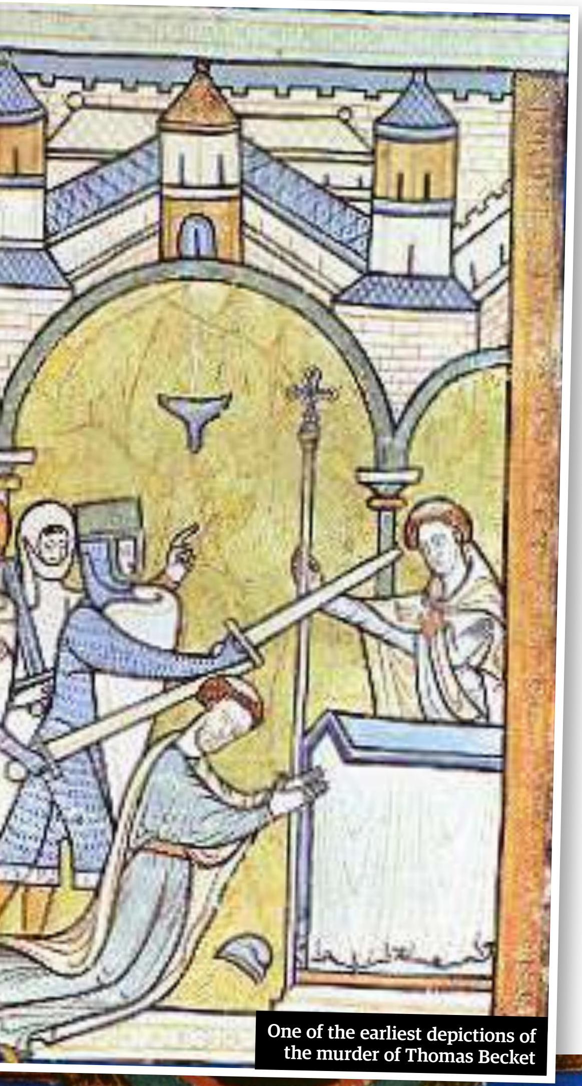


The marriage of Henry's daughter, Matilda, and Henry the Lion of Saxony

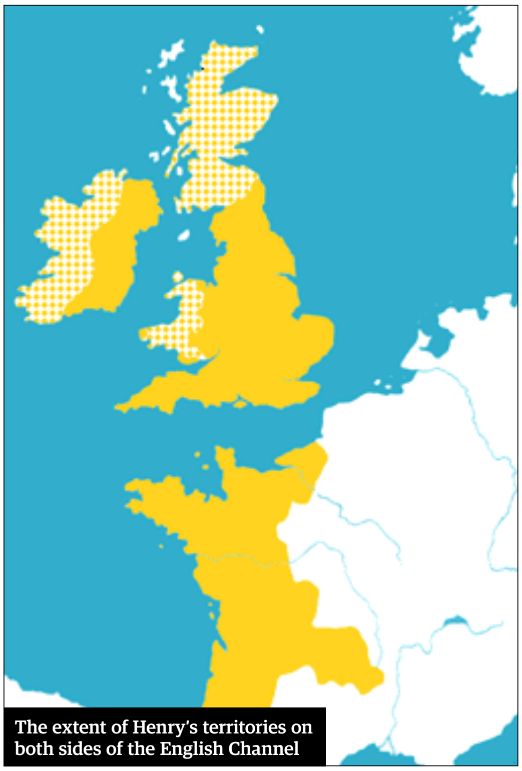


Woodstock Palace, Oxfordshire: one of Henry's many building projects and the setting for his liaisons with Rosamund Clifford

“Richard’s unquenchable ambition produced chaos during Henry’s final years; he was determined to secure the entirety of the Angevin inheritance for himself”



One of the earliest depictions of the murder of Thomas Becket



The extent of Henry’s territories on both sides of the English Channel

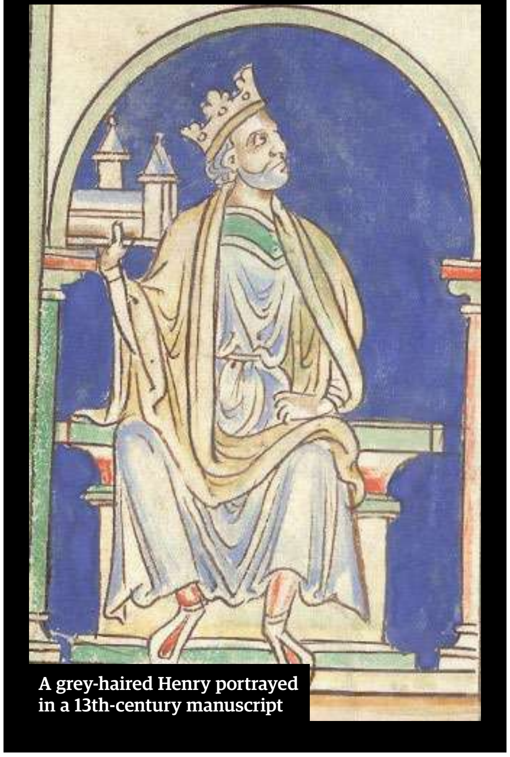
An ageing king

In 1177, Peter of Blois penned a compelling, if unabashedly sycophantic, portrait of the king

“You will know,” Peter began, “that the lord king has been red-haired so far,” but “the coming of old age and grey hair has altered that colour somewhat.” Henry was of average stature: “His height is medium, so that neither does he appear great among the small, nor yet does he seem small among the great.” The real magic lay in the eyes. They remained “white and plain while he is of calm spirit; but in anger and disorder of heart they shine like fire and flash in fury.” Henry was also a “man strong, agile and bold,” with “curved legs, a horseman’s shins, broad chest, and a boxer’s arms,” but he had his share of frailties.

“Part of the toenail,” Peter reported, “is grown into the flesh of his foot, to the vehement outrage of the whole.” This condition can only have been exacerbated by Henry’s constant activity. “He never sits,” Peter explained, “unless riding a horse or eating” and “always are in his hands bow, sword, spear and arrow, unless he be in council or in books.”

Indeed, Henry appears to have relished the life of the mind. At his court, as Peter put it, “every day is school, in the constant conversation of the most literate”. It all made, by Peter’s flattering account, for quite the paragon of kingship: “No one is more mild to the afflicted, no one more friendly to the poor, no one more unbearable to the proud.”



A grey-haired Henry portrayed in a 13th-century manuscript

© Getty Images, Adam Bishop, Cartedaos, Stephen Montgomery

Bluffer's Guide
The Revolt of 1173-74

ENGLAND, 1173-74

Timeline

1170

Henry II crowns his eldest son, also named Henry, so as to make the eventual succession smoother. Monarchic power, however, remains with the elder.

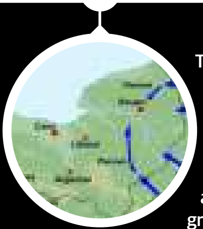
C.1172/73

Henry II grants his six-year-old son John three castles that had been within the realm of Henry the Young King's inheritance.

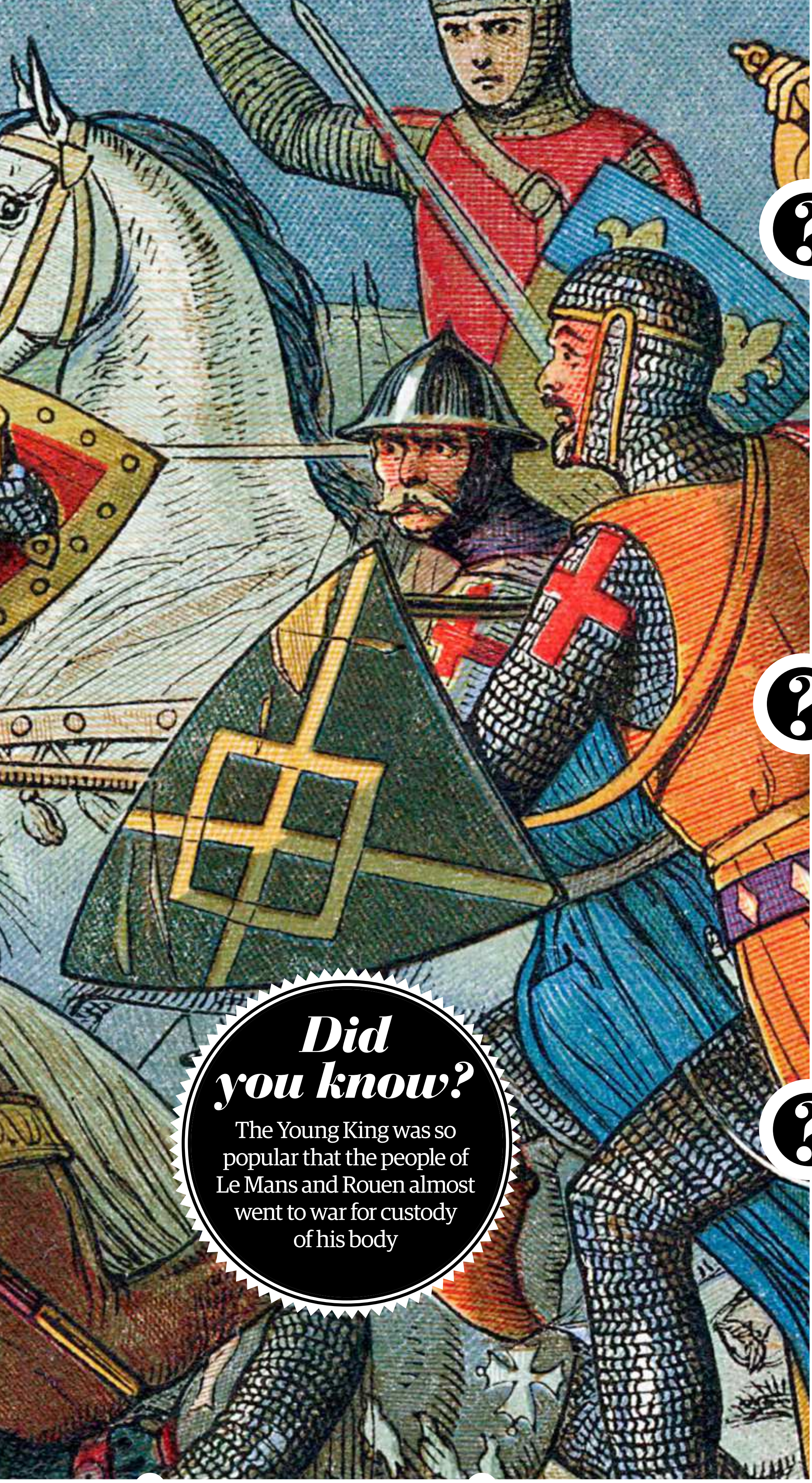
MARCH 1173

The Young King escapes to France to build an alliance against his father, made up of dissatisfied members of the aristocracy as well as Henry II's enemy, Louis VII.

APRIL 1173



The alliance launches an unsuccessful attack on Henry II's forces in Normandy. The count of Boulogne is killed, Louis' army is defeated and the Bretons suffer great loss of life.



What was it?

In 1173, Henry the Young King led a rebellion against his father, King Henry II of England. He was supported by his two brothers - Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany and the future Richard Lionheart - along with his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and King Louis VII of France. He managed to form an even greater alliance by promising land and wealth to the counts of Flanders, Boulogne and Blois, and won the support of William, King of Scots, with the lure of Northumberland. In April, the rebels launched an invasion of the English fiefdom of Normandy, attacking from all sides. But they were no match for King Henry's forces, and William's invasion of the north of England also failed. In the spring of 1174, the rebellion continued. William was defeated at the Battle of Alnwick and one by one, the rebel barons in England surrendered. King Henry then returned to Normandy to make a settlement with his enemies, and on 30 September "the king's son, and his brothers, returned to their father and to his service, as their lord".

Why did it happen?

Henry the Young King was crowned by his father in 1170. It was a symbolic gesture, intended to make the eventual succession of power smoother, but the 15-year-old Henry was not satisfied. He claimed he did not have the financial resources to properly reward his many knights, and he wanted autonomous power as well as the title. When his youngest brother, John, was bequeathed with three castles that had originally been promised to him, Young Henry saw it as the final straw and launched his rebellion. It was not difficult to rally together an army as his father's suspected involvement in the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket three years previously had left Henry II an unpopular man throughout Christendom - including with his own wife, Eleanor. However, the blame has also been placed on the rebel barons, who may have manipulated the inexperienced prince for their own gain.

Who was involved?

King Henry II

c.1133-89

Henry Plantagenet was crowned king of England in 1154 and he greatly expanded English territories in France. It was due to tensions over the future inheritance of the empire that the revolt broke out.

Henry the Young King

c.1155-83

Henry II's eldest son was crowned during his father's reign but would never become king regnant as he died aged just 28. Instead, his brother Richard succeeded the throne.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

c.1122-1204

The wife of Henry II, the pair eventually became estranged and Eleanor supported her son's attempt to topple him. She was captured and not released until 1189, when Richard ascended the throne.

Did you know?

The Young King was so popular that the people of Le Mans and Rouen almost went to war for custody of his body

13 JULY 1174

William the Lion, King of Scotland, is captured at the Battle of Alnwick. In the aftermath, Henry II is able to sweep up the opposition in England.

30 SEPTEMBER 1174

Henry II returns to Normandy and makes a financial settlement with his eldest son and his allies, ending the revolt.

© Alamy, Getty Images, Franck Badaire

1122-1204

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Loathed, adored, celebrated and damned, the rebellious Eleanor of Aquitaine defied her gender, waged war and crafted Medieval Europe into a land she could rule

Written by Frances White

When Pope Eugene III requested that Louis VII, king of France, lead a Crusade to help rescue the Crusader states in the Middle East, he took up the sword with enthusiasm. However, Louis would not travel to the Holy Land alone. His wife, adored by him, despised by others, did not plan to sit back and wait at home for her husband to return.

Eleanor of Aquitaine's launch and involvement in the Second Crusade would go down in myth and legend. It is said that the queen rode through the streets of Vézelay dressed in the costume of an Amazon upon a white steed, brandishing her sword and urging the people to join her. Whether it truly occurred or not, this image of the warrior queen has survived through the centuries, and her enduring connection with the Second Crusade would see Eleanor damned for its failure.

Eleanor was born to rule. The first child of William X, Duke of Aquitaine, her doting father bestowed upon his eldest daughter an education fitting not a submissive queen but one who would rule. Alongside general household skills and 'womanly' pursuits of embroidery and needlework, she also learned history and arithmetic, she could speak Latin, ride a horse proficiently and hunt. She grew up in her grandfather William IX's court surrounded by music, poetry and most notably, courtly love. All this bred a girl who was lively, intelligent, confident and headstrong. These were not traits prized in ladies at the time, but they were essential for Eleanor, as she would soon become one of the most powerful heiresses Europe had ever seen.

Her only brother died in the spring of 1130, along with her mother. This left Eleanor as the heir presumptive of one of the largest domains in France, larger than those held even by the monarch. It would not take long for these kingdoms to fall into Eleanor's hands. In 1137, when Eleanor was aged approximately 15, her father went on pilgrimage and left his daughters in the care of the archbishop of Bordeaux. However, on the journey home, he fell ill and died. Poitou and Aquitaine were now clasped in the hands of a 15-year-old female heir.

All this control was a very dangerous thing for the young teenager to bear. Power-hungry men of the period were not above kidnapping eligible heiresses to seize their lands and claim a title. Eleanor's father knew this, and placed his daughter under the guardianship of King Louis VI of France, also known as Louis the Fat. William's will stipulated that Louis take care of his daughter and her lands until a suitable husband was found. Mortally ill and so obese he was confined to his bed, Louis was very aware of his own impending mortality and did not intend to waste this opportunity. Within hours, Louis arranged

A guide to the Crusades

From 1096 to 1291, Jerusalem was at the epicentre of a war that saw millions killed

1st 1096-99 Levant, Anatolia

As Turkish forces gained control of the Holy Land, Pope Urban II called for a Crusade to eliminate the threat. Gradually, the Christian forces reclaimed Jerusalem. They also began to set up Latin Christian states in the region.

Victors: Crusaders

2nd 1147-49 Iberia, Holy Land, Egypt

When Edessa, fell, Pope Eugene III encouraged the monarchies of France and Germany to wage war. However, both armies were defeated by the Turks amid claims the Byzantine emperor plotted against the Crusaders.

Victors: Muslims

3rd 1189-92 Levant, Anatolia

After Jerusalem was conquered by Saladin, King Richard I of England and King Philip II of France united to claim it back. They enjoyed a string of successes, notably in the cities of Acre and Jaffa, but failed to capture Jerusalem.

Victors: Mostly Crusaders

4th 1202-04 Balkans

With Jerusalem still under Muslim control, the Fourth Crusade was launched. Although the aim had been to claim Jerusalem, the Crusaders instead sacked Constantinople, beginning the decline of the Byzantine Empire.

Victors: Crusaders

5th 1213-21 Levant, Egypt

With Hungarian and Austrian armies failing to conquer Jerusalem, Flemish and Frisian forces attempt to claim Ayyubid and prevent the Crusaders having to fight on two fronts. The attack was repelled with huge Crusader losses.

Victors: Muslims

6th 1228-29 Cyprus, Near East

With the aim to reclaim Jerusalem, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II used diplomacy and lies to obtain Jerusalem in exchange for a ten-year truce with the Sultan of Egypt. Jerusalem was in Crusader hands.

Victors: Crusaders

7th 1248-54 Al-Mansourah, Egypt

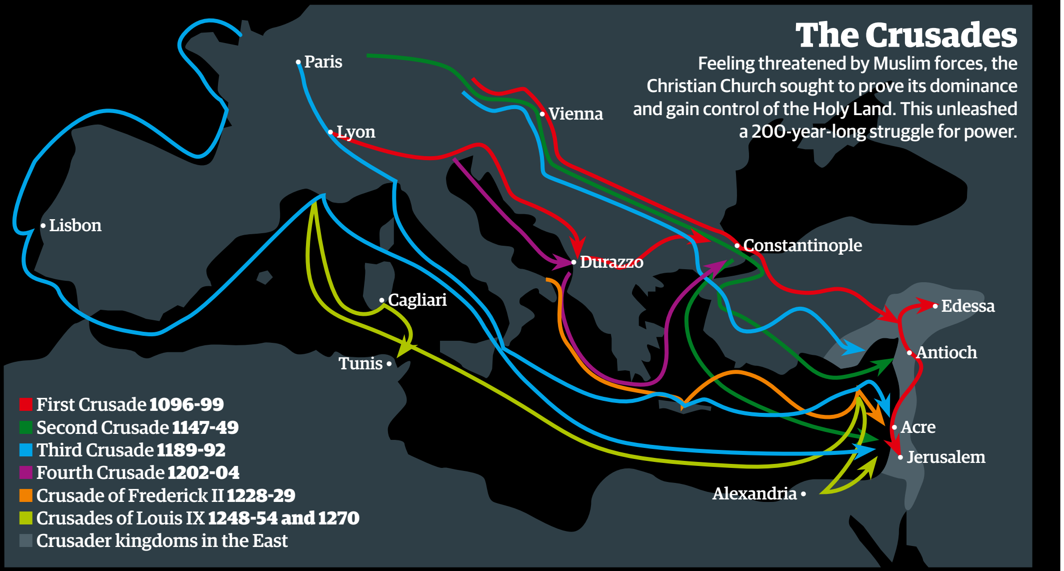
In 1244, Jerusalem returned to Muslim control, so Louis IX of France led a Crusade to get it back. Although they enjoyed initial success, the Crusader forces were defeated and Louis himself captured and ransomed.

Victors: Muslims

8th/9th 1270-72 Tunisia, Near East

Louis IX launched a final attempt to reclaim the Holy Land, but became ill on the journey and died. This prompted Edward I to sail to Acre, where he enjoyed victories, but he was forced home to solve conflicts there.

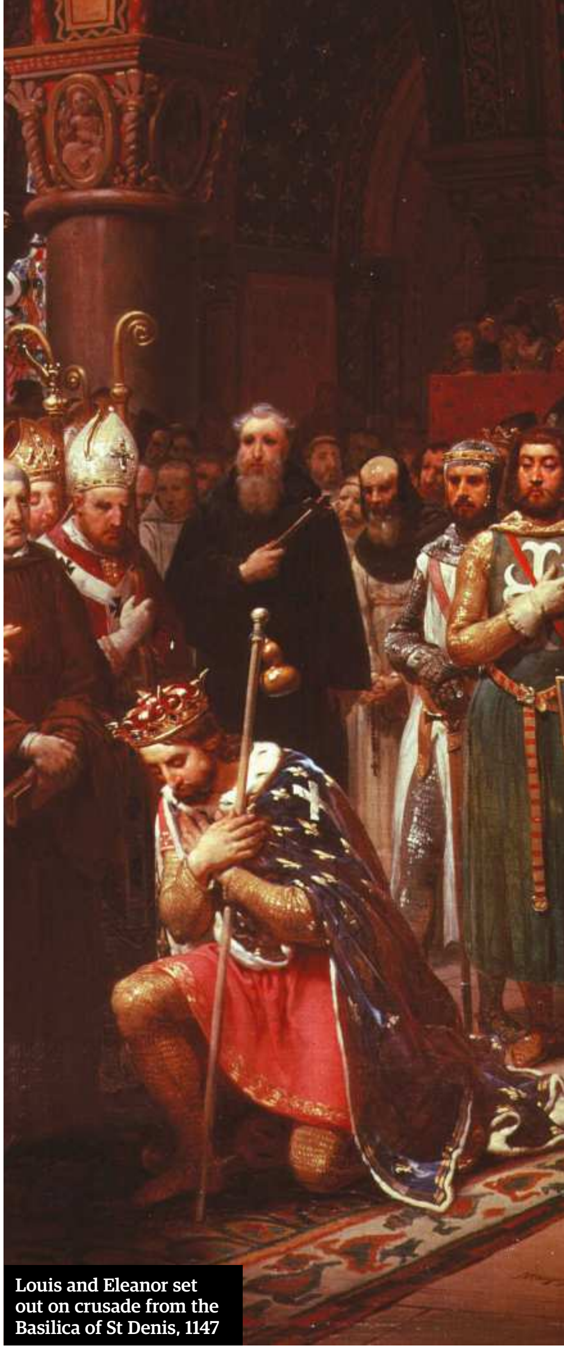
Victors: Muslims



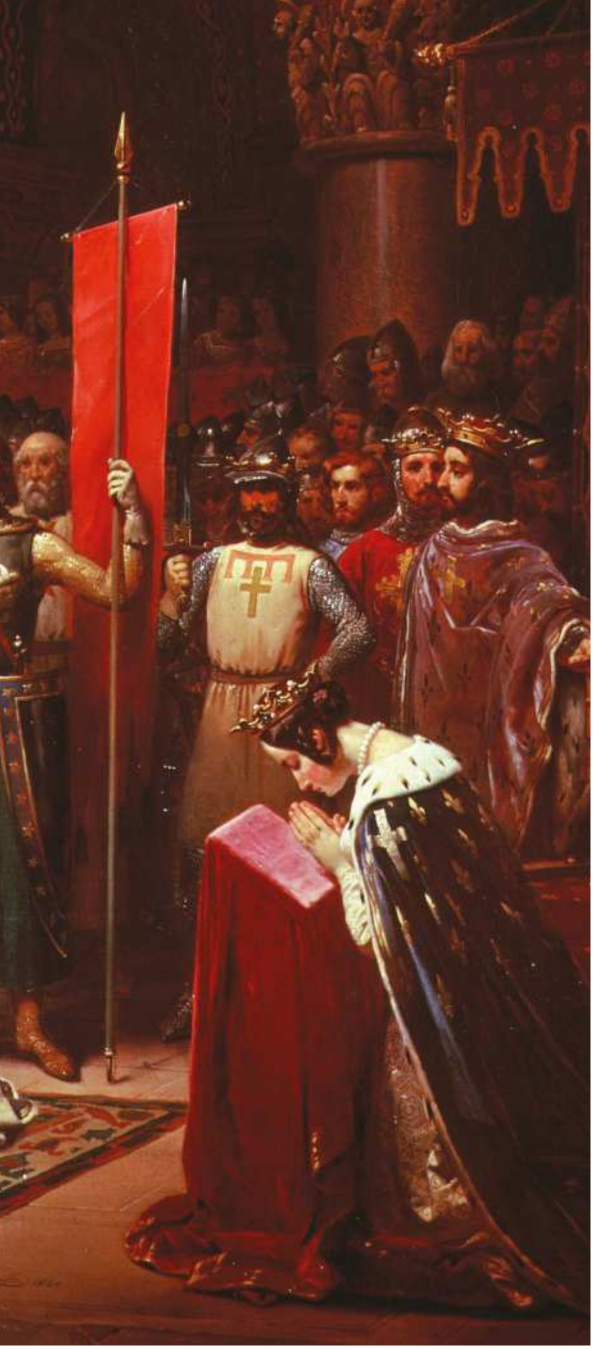
The Crusades

Feeling threatened by Muslim forces, the Christian Church sought to prove its dominance and gain control of the Holy Land. This unleashed a 200-year-long struggle for power.

🟥 First Crusade **1096-99**
🟩 Second Crusade **1147-49**
🟦 Third Crusade **1189-92**
🟪 Fourth Crusade **1202-04**
🟧 Crusade of Frederick II **1228-29**
🟨 Crusades of Louis IX **1248-54 and 1270**
▨ Crusader kingdoms in the East



Louis and Eleanor set out on crusade from the Basilica of St Denis, 1147



for Eleanor to be married to his son, Prince Louis, bringing her ample lands under the control of the French crown.

Louis the Fat married Eleanor off to his son confident in her suitability as a wife. Not only did she come with lands that greatly strengthened the French crown, she was also stunningly beautiful, young, fertile and a lady of court. However, Eleanor was anything but a quiet, submissive wife. Prince Louis was a very pious, meek man, a younger son intended originally for a monastic life, but Eleanor had been trained to rule. She had knowledge beyond her husband's, she was strong where he was weak, forceful where he was relenting, and he was completely and utterly besotted with her.

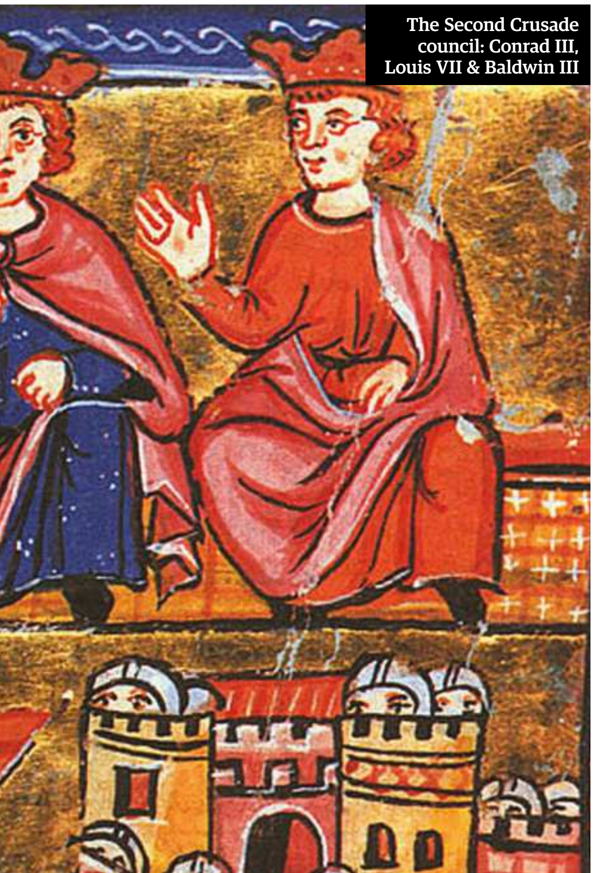
As expected, Louis the Fat shortly died, the prince became King Louis VII and Eleanor was elevated to queen of the Franks. Her colourful and high-spirited nature was not well liked in the royal court, and Louis' mother loathed her daughter-in-law, believing her to be a bad influence on her son. However, as much as Eleanor's unusual behaviour confused and infuriated the king, he just could not resist bending to her every desire.

Sensitive and pious though he may have been, Louis was a king, and a king in the Medieval era could not avoid war. An illicit affair involving Eleanor's younger sister, Petronella, with Raoul I of Vermandois – then married to the daughter of the powerful Stephen of Blois – caused war to break out. With Eleanor's encouragement, Louis supported Petronella and Raoul, and in the resulting conflict, the king was responsible for the burning of the town of Vitry. The terrified townspeople sought refuge in a church, but it also burned to the ground and more than 1,000 people were lost in the flames. The event would have a profound effect on the sensitive Louis, who was plagued by his guilty conscience and the eternal screams of the dying.

What Louis needed was a pilgrimage to clear his conscience, and luckily for him, a trip to the Holy Land was just on the horizon, though it would not be quite as peaceful as he hoped. In the autumn of 1145, Pope Eugene III called upon Louis to lead a Crusade to protect the Crusader-owned kingdom of Jerusalem. The king obliged but he would not be waging war alone.

Eleanor not only decided to join her husband on Crusade, but took up the Crusader cross with, likely, more enthusiasm than he himself. Aged 19, she offered the Church the aid of her fighting vassals, which they were very happy to accept. However, they were less than pleased when she proclaimed that she, accompanied by 300 of her ladies-in-waiting, would join the Crusaders. Eleanor said that she and her ladies would help tend the wounded, but it is also likely that the headstrong queen was not so keen on her meek husband fighting a war without her. She appointed herself leader of her soldiers and departed with her husband.

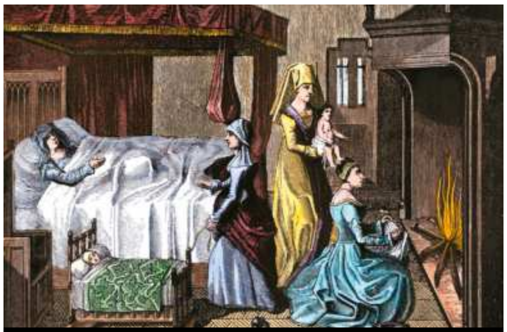
The women were dressed in armour and carried lances, but they did not fight. Nevertheless, the prospect of 300 women riding off with warriors was looked upon suspiciously by her contemporaries. However, Eleanor was not one to be swayed by criticism. Although the Church may not have approved of her, when the army reached Constantinople, the warrior queen quickly impressed, and she was even compared to the mythical queen of the Amazons.



The Second Crusade council: Conrad III, Louis VII & Baldwin III

Growing up in Medieval Europe

Being born in the Middle Ages meant life was fated to follow a certain path



Nobility

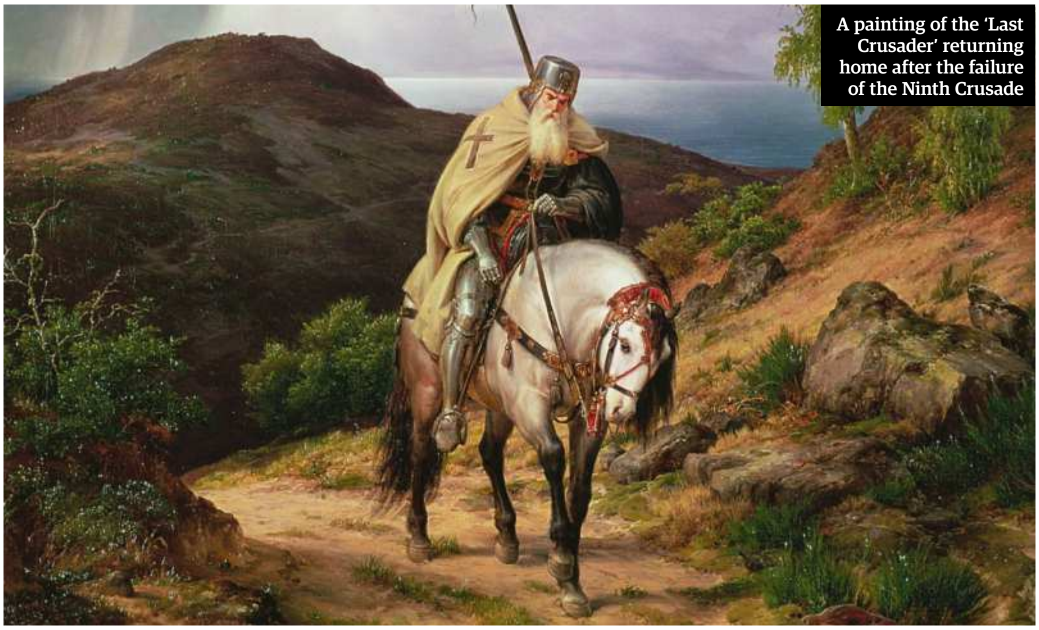
Boys: Sons were sought after to continue the family name, and royal boys were especially prized. Noble boys began training to be a knight aged just seven, and those unsuitable were sent to monasteries. Popular boys toys were wooden soldiers, toy horses and whips.

Girls: Daughters were seen as expensive, as a dowry had to be paid to the groom at marriage, which could occur as young as seven. Generally noble girls were sent to train as ladies at a young age, learning how to weave, sing, play instruments and how to care for children.

Peasants

Boys: In poorer households, boys helped tend the fields and care for animals. Work was so consuming that children as young as two could be left alone. Poor children did not receive education apart from in the church, and few peasant boys knew how to read.

Girls: Female peasant children were expected to help their mothers with household chores. As they were working hand to mouth, toys were scarce and often hand made. Like their noble counterparts, peasant girls were married off as soon as they reached maturity.



A painting of the 'Last Crusader' returning home after the failure of the Ninth Crusade

Unfortunately, the Crusade wasn't going quite so smoothly. The French had been informed by the Byzantine emperor that their ally, the German king Conrad, had enjoyed victory against a Turkish army. However, as the French army continued their journey onwards, a dazed and ailing Conrad was found near their camp and revealed the truth. The Europeans hadn't won – in fact they had been massacred. It was with haste and some unease that the French and what remained of the German army headed to Antioch, where Eleanor's uncle ruled.

Little did the Crusaders know they were already being stalked by Turks. The French monarchs decided to split, with Louis at the rear of the column with the baggage trains and Eleanor at the front with her vassal, Geoffrey de Rancon. Although the vanguard was able to reach the summit where they planned to make camp, de Rancon decided to continue onwards. The rear of the column, laden down with baggage, struggled to keep up and the Turks leapt on this opportunity. The French, including many unarmed pilgrims, were trapped and unprepared. Any who tried to escape were killed, and the king, disguised in simple pilgrim clothes, barely escaped the attack by scaling a rock.

The blame for the massacre was placed at de Rancon's feet and, as he was Eleanor's vassal, so it was at hers. The fact that her own soldiers had marched in front and weren't involved did little to help her popularity, and it was even argued that the majority of the baggage was hers. Thus, despite having no involvement in the fight, the queen was blamed for the disaster. Tensions between the royal couple were reaching a fever pitch.

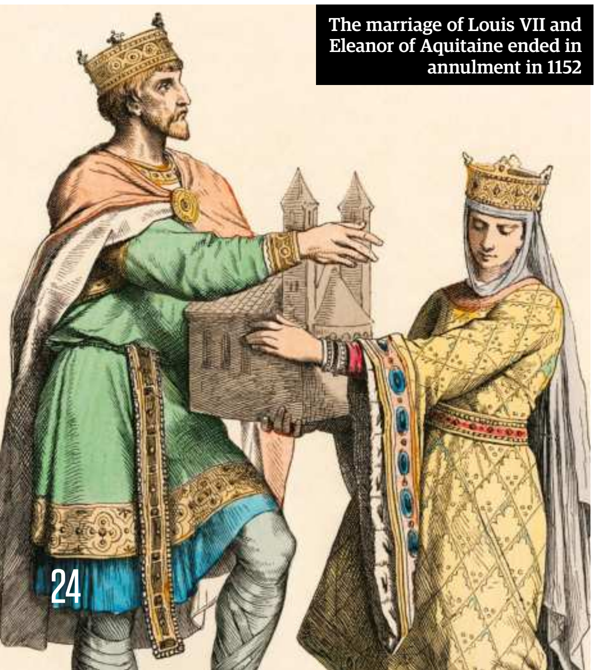
When the Crusaders reached Antioch, it gave Eleanor an opportunity to renew her friendship with the lord of the city and her uncle, Raymond. Not only was Raymond close in age to Eleanor, but he was also tall, handsome and charming. In fact, she spent so much time with her uncle that rumours quickly spread about an illicit affair between the two. Raymond suggested they first capture Edessa, a strategic stronghold in the Holy Land, but Louis was determined to focus solely on Jerusalem. When Eleanor supported her uncle, it was the last straw – the meek, adoring and abiding king had finally reached his limit.

Louis, likely for the first time in his marriage, demanded that Eleanor follow him. His queen, outraged, called into question the entire marriage, claiming that she and her husband were too closely related, and this was grounds for divorce. This didn't go down well with Louis and in an effort to establish his authority, he took Eleanor away from her uncle and Antioch against her will and headed to Jerusalem. For the woman who was born to rule, to command and to control, this was humiliating beyond all measure. The remainder of the Crusade achieved little – Louis' subsequent assault on Damascus was a failure and the royal couple returned to France in different ships.

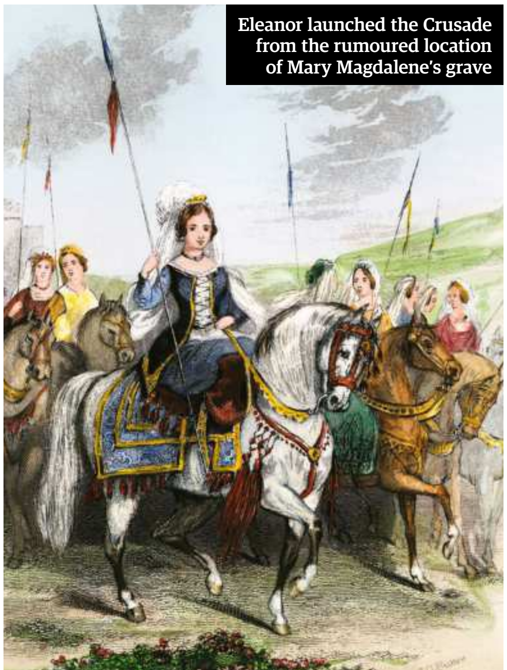
A marriage where Eleanor was expected to be meek and obliging was not going to work. She could deal with her sensitive and generous husband, but the one that returned from the Crusade was as humiliated as her and increasingly suspicious of the growing relationship between niece and uncle. Although they had children, no male heirs were born, and Louis faced increasing opposition to Eleanor from his barons. The king was left with no option and in 1152, the marriage was annulled. The lands that Louis' father had so slyly secured for his son were torn away from him and aged about 30, Eleanor once again became one of the most eligible and desirable heiresses in Europe.

However, Eleanor was no longer a naïve 15-year-old – she was a worldly and knowledgeable woman. She knew she would have to remarry and she intended to do so on her own terms. Amid several attempts of kidnap and forced marriage, she manufactured her own union with Henry, Duke of Normandy, who was the future king of England. Henry wasn't stupid either; he travelled immediately to visit Eleanor and within eight weeks of her annulment to Louis, she was married to a man even more closely related to her than her first husband.

On paper, the union was a powerful one. In 1154, Henry became Henry II, king of England, and his lands were combined with Eleanor's. This united England, Normandy and the West of France into a hugely powerful and influential kingdom. However, both Henry and Eleanor were strong, dominating characters. Henry was the eldest child – he too had been born to rule. He was used to getting his way and had an explosive and at times terrifying temper. Eleanor was 11 years older than him, knew her worth, and wasn't prepared to obey the commands of a domineering husband. But despite their stormy relationship, the couple had five sons



The marriage of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine ended in annulment in 1152



Eleanor launched the Crusade from the rumoured location of Mary Magdalene's grave and three daughters, and together they ruled over an impressive Medieval empire.

However, a storm was brewing. Henry was ruled by passion and this led to many illicit affairs and a number of mistresses. His affair with one mistress in particular, Rosamund Clifford, became public knowledge and drove his proud and headstrong wife to breaking point. Eleanor departed for her native land of Aquitaine and took several of her children, including Richard, her chosen heir, with her. The queen was tired of dealing with the wills of husbands; she wanted to rule Aquitaine, and she wanted to rule alone.

Eleanor wasn't the only one who had been pushed to the limit by Henry. Several of her sons had inherited her proud, stubborn nature and decided that enough was enough. Henry the younger secretly travelled to Aquitaine and, likely encouraged by Eleanor, joined with two of his brothers, Richard and Geoffrey. Together they decided to rebel against their father. For Eleanor the rebellion was the culmination of years of abiding his infidelities, bearing his children and a lifetime of sharing power - it was her chance to rule Aquitaine with her beloved son Richard. But, as always with Eleanor, fate did not run smooth. The rebellion was squashed, and the woman born to rule was thrown in prison.

For the next 16 years, Eleanor was imprisoned in England. If the humiliation wasn't bad enough, the lack of contact with her sons over the years caused her to become distanced from them. Now aged 50, Eleanor hopelessly and powerlessly waited for her chance to rule again. It would take the death of her tempestuous husband for her to finally glimpse freedom once more.

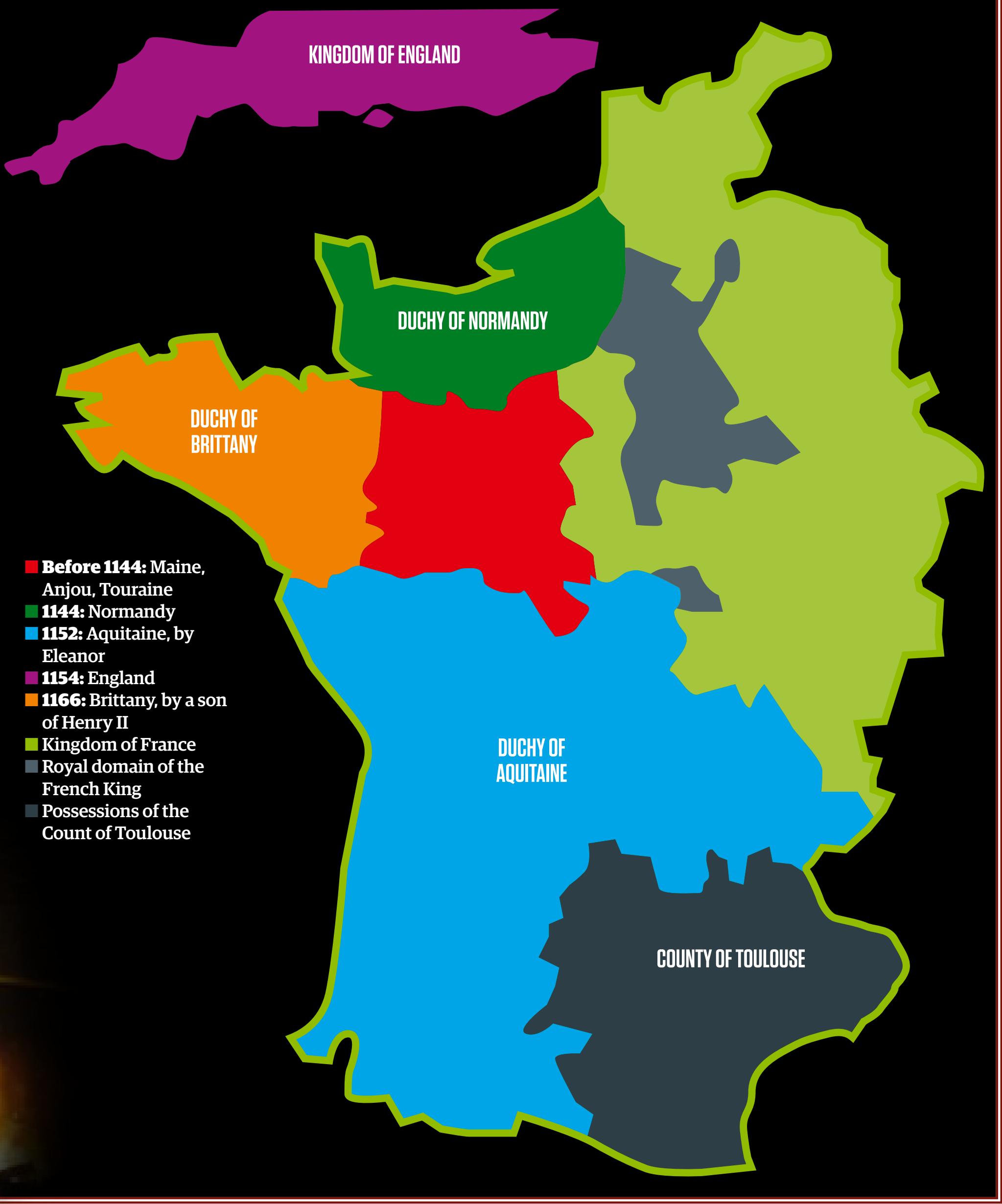
When Henry died in 1189, Richard I became heir. Although Eleanor's favourite son had become more distant, one of his first acts was to release his mother from prison. Eleanor could finally fulfil the role she was born to play - ruler. While Richard, who would become known as Richard the Lionheart, travelled and embarked on the Third Crusade, she ruled England as regent. She defended his lands, and even used her political acumen to negotiate Richard's release when he was captured.

Her citizens approved of their able, intelligent and strong queen, and, although it was likely no concern to her, Eleanor finally earned popularity. The queen was not one to let old age stop her. She travelled across Europe, cementing powerful marriages for her brood of children, managing her army and building a strong and influential empire. At the age of 70, she rode over the Pyrenees to collect her choice of wife for Richard, then continued to traverse the Alps. She would outlive nearly all of her children, and survived long into the reign of her youngest son, John.

However, determined as she was, Eleanor could not avoid time catching up with her. She retired to the religious house of Fontevraud where she became a nun. In 1204, aged 82, Eleanor died and was buried beside Richard, the son she adored. Her legacy would continue not only in the children she bore, but in her lands, which remained loyal to England even after the loss of Normandy. Though many were quick to discount her for her frivolity in her youth, she had proved herself an intelligent, driven and wise ruler. As the nuns who spent her final years with her wrote, she was a queen "who surpassed almost all the queens of the world".

Expansion of the Angevin Empire

When Henry, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, married Eleanor in 1152, Normandy, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Aquitaine, Gascony, Poitou and Auvergne were brought together. When their son, Geoffrey, brought Brittany into the mix, the concentration of fiefs held by one man became a very real threat to the French monarchy.


KINGDOM OF ENGLAND
DUCHY OF NORMANDY
DUCHY OF BRITTANY
DUCHY OF AQUITAINE
COUNTY OF TOULOUSE
🟥 **Before 1144:** Maine, Anjou, Touraine
🟩 **1144:** Normandy
🟦 **1152:** Aquitaine, by Eleanor
🟪 **1154:** England
🟧 **1166:** Brittany, by a son of Henry II
🟩 Kingdom of France
⬛ Royal domain of the French King
⬛ Possessions of the Count of Toulouse

1189-99

Richard I

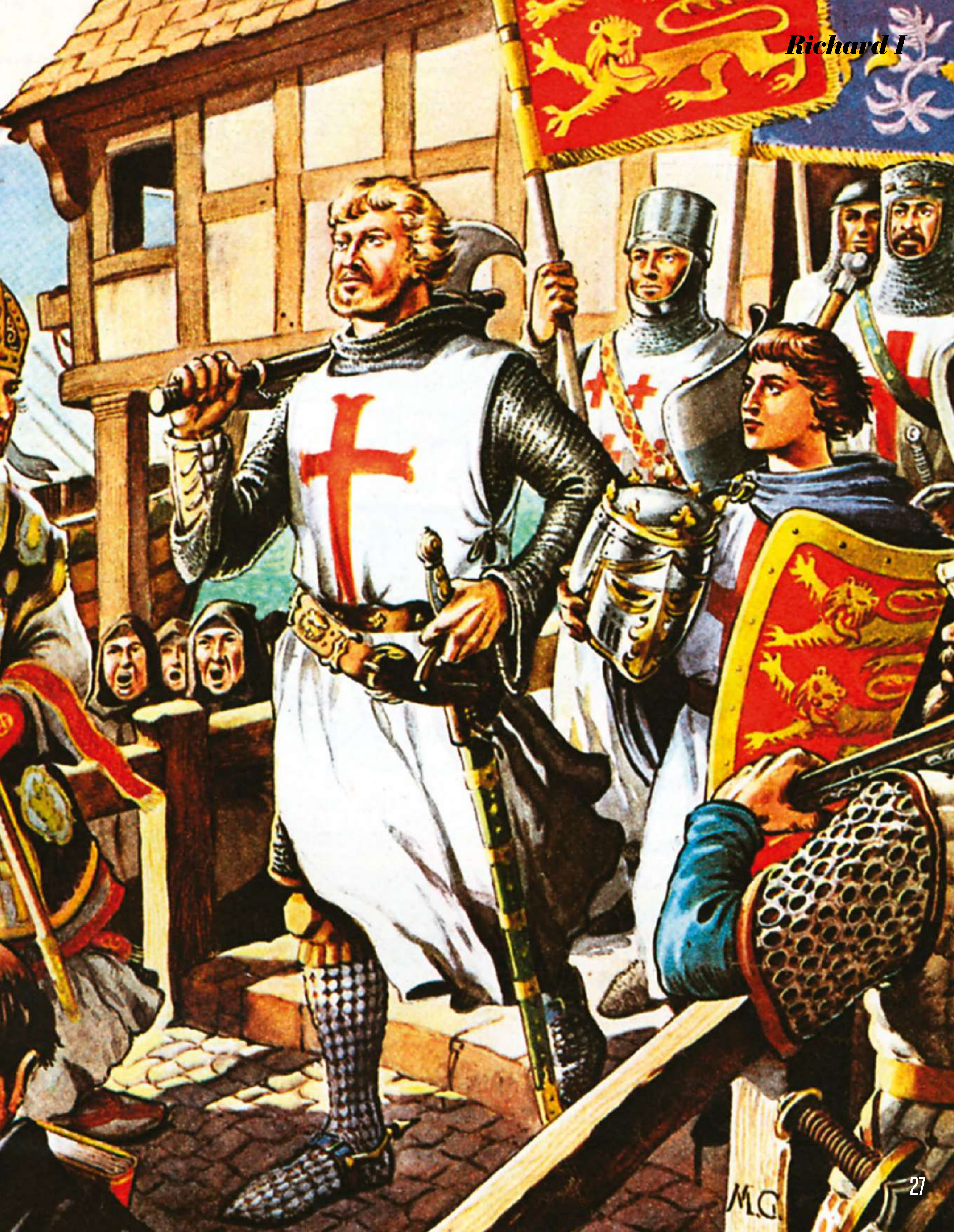
Richard the Lionheart was the most famous Christian king of the Medieval period, waging a religious war against the Muslim East, attempting to conquer the Holy Land and Jerusalem

One of the most bloodthirsty, tactically astute and arguably wise kings that England ever saw, King Richard I - famously known as Richard the Lionheart - took the military might of the Medieval Christian West into the heart of the Islamic East in order to re-conquer the Holy Land (Palestine) from the sultan of Syria, Saladin. Indeed, with his Third Crusade - often referred to as 'Richard's Crusade' - the English king led literally thousands of knights thousands of miles into a territory that had long been fraught with religious tension and then, through a series of military victories, heightened those further, cutting a hole not just through the rival troops of Saladin, but also through Islam itself.

For Richard, though, the quest to the Holy Land was but part of a life that was characterised by conflict and combat, with him born into one of the most infamous dynasties in Europe, the House of Plantagenet. Son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard was born into a family famous for feuding, with his father's legacy of fighting with all and sundry, including his own wife who he ended up imprisoning due to her strong influence over not just his sons but also many of the barons and nobility in England and France. As such, it is no surprise that during his early years not only did he fight against his father but also, following the pair briefly reconciling, against his father's kingdom's own barons he put down a series of revolts.

Indeed, by the time Richard successfully took down the supposedly impregnable fortress of Taillebourg in the spring of 1179 while fighting rebels, he had won a reputation as a highly skilled military commander and fierce combatant, with an infamous reputation of cruelty and brutality against anyone who stood against him. His hunger for conquest, however, did not stop in defeating rebels - soon after the revolts had been quelled, Richard was challenging his father for the throne. This led Richard to end up not just fighting his father but also his brothers, with only the passing of his older brothers Henry and Geoffrey as well as eventually his father allowing him to ascend as king.

"He led thousands of knights thousands of miles into a territory that had long been fraught with religious tension"

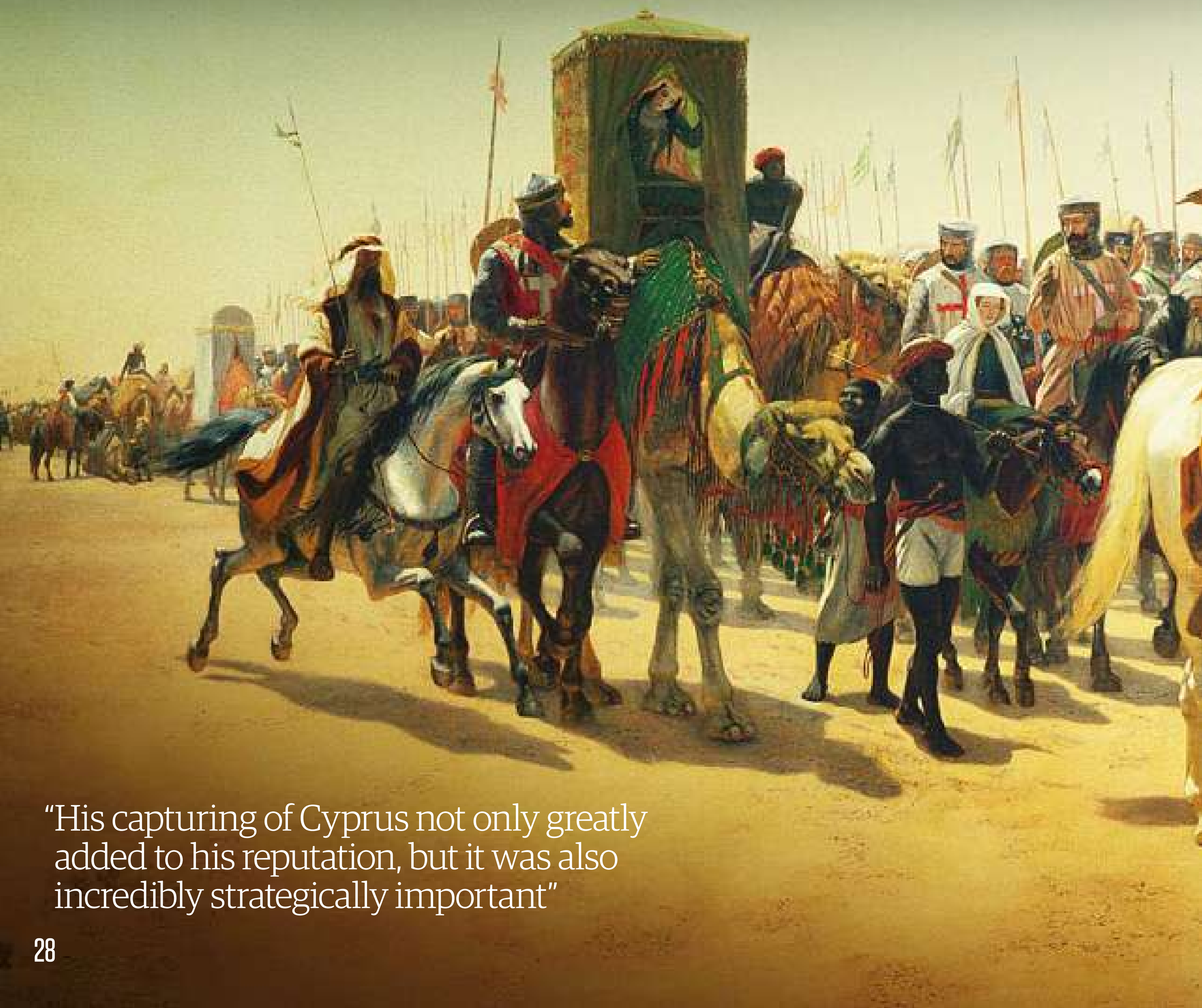

M.G.

Having been born in England, Richard was officially invested as duke of Normandy and then crowned king of England on 3 September 1189 at Westminster Abbey. Now finally free from the constraints of fighting his family and the rebels in his territories, Richard was free to undertake what had, since 1187 when he had taken the Christian cross as count of Poitou (something he had done to renounce his past wickedness) and Saladin had taken Jerusalem, been his primary aim - retake the Holy Land from the infidels. The problem was that while Richard's will and desire for combat was unabated by years of conflict, his inherited kingdom was not, with the royal coffers largely empty.

Richard therefore immediately set about raising the necessary funds to launch his own crusading army. Firstly, he agreed with King Philip II of France to undertake the crusade jointly - with both leaders scared that if one left Europe then the other would invade his territories - and then proceeded to raise taxes in England, free King William I of Scotland from his oath of subservience in exchange for 10,000 marks, and sell much land and property, with the proceeds being funnelled into assembling an army of 4,000 knights, 4,000 foot soldiers and a huge fleet of ships. At one point Richard reportedly said that "I would have sold London if I could find a buyer", so determined was he to proceed on the Third Crusade. This large army was to travel with Phillip's to Palestine and retake Jerusalem at any cost. Boarding his flagship, Richard I left England in the summer of 1190.

His passage to the Holy Land was eventful, with him first stopping in Sicily - where he famously freed his sister from the usurper King Tancred I - but then also conquered the entirety of the island nation of Cyprus, overthrowing the despot ruler Isaac Komnenos and installing Richard de Camville and Robert of Thornham as its governors. Interestingly he later sold the island to the Knights Templar, who then sold it to Guy of Lusignan, who was one of Richard's fellow crusaders. Indeed, while, as we shall see, Richard made many conquests in the Holy Land, his capturing of Cyprus not only greatly added to his reputation, but was also strategically incredibly important as it allowed the waters on the approach to Palestine to be controlled by Christian forces.

After multiple conquests and even getting married on his journey into the East, Richard eventually arrived in the Holy Land at the city of



"His capturing of Cyprus not only greatly added to his reputation, but it was also incredibly strategically important"

Acre on 8 June 1191. He immediately joined forces with Guy of Lusignan and Conrad of Montferrat and took the city in the now-famous 1191 Siege of Acre. As his and his allies' flags were raised above the city, Richard's Crusade had well and truly begun, with what was to be the first of several victorious conquests now firmly under his belt. Buoyed by his victory, Richard soon left Acre and marched south with his Crusader army, fearing that if Jerusalem was to be taken then this military momentum needed to be maintained.

Momentum was indeed maintained thanks to Richard's leadership, with victory both in the Battle of Arsuf and at Beit Nuba, leaving the Crusader army a mere 19 kilometres from their ultimate destination of Jerusalem. By this point, Richard's multiple victories had left morale in Saladin's forces low and it has since been postulated that if the army had directly besieged the city it would have fallen to them quickly.

However, news of a possible Muslim relief army and poor weather led to Richard ordering the army to retreat back towards the coast, with him fearing that if they tried to take the city right now they might become trapped and get wiped out. Returning to the captured city of Ascalon, Richard fortified his position. It was here where he would make the first of multiple negotiations with Saladin. However, at this stage they were unsuccessful, what with the invasion still fresh.

In June 1192, Richard's Crusader army once more advanced towards Jerusalem – an action catalysed by the assassination of Conrad of Montferrat by the Hashshashin, an elite group of Islamic assassins.

The lion roars: Richard's top five victories

Messina
4 October 1190

Arriving in Sicily to see his sister, Queen Joan of Sicily, freed from prison, Richard proceeded to attack and capture the historic city of Messina. After looting it of every penny it held and burning it to the ground, Richard set up his base there, eventually forcing Joan's captor and nephew Tancred to sign a treaty ensuring her release, an inheritance of 20,000 ounces of gold, and his nephew Arthur of Brittany enshrined as Tancred's heir. Richard proceeded to spend much of the year in Sicily.

Cyprus
1 May 1191

Heading for Acre, a storm caused many ships to land on the south coast of Cyprus. Cyprus' despot ruler Isaac Komnenos proceeded to take Richard's sister prisoner. Richard, having finally discovered the stricken ships, arrived at the port of Lemesos and demanded his troops and sister to be released. Komnenos refused so Richard landed his army, took the port and then the entire island nation, capturing Isaac and placing him in silver chains.

Acre
July 1191

After landing in the Holy Land on 8 June, two weeks after his travelling companion Philip of Alsace, Richard proceeded to join him in the now famous siege of Acre. Richard finally secured the city's surrender on 12 July after weeks of combat, with the Christian troops entering the city and imprisoning the Muslim garrison. Richard, along with fellow Crusader Conrad of Montferrat, raised the banners of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, France, England and the Duchy of Austria.

Arsuf
7 September 1191

Having left Acre, Richard proceeded south and was engaged by Saladin's forces at Arsuf in Palestine. Following a series of attacks by Saladin's forces, Richard charged the main body of Saladin's troops in a bold counter attack that broke their ranks. Importantly, while this victory gained Richard no resources, it did result in the coastal area of southern Palestine falling to him, making an assault on Jerusalem possible.

Jaffa
8 August 1192

Richard led a daring assault on the besieged city of Jaffa, which had been taken a month earlier by Saladin. Leading just 54 knights, a few hundred infantry and about 2,000 crossbowmen, Richard caused the city's Muslim garrison to flee from the city, with Saladin himself unable to regroup them for some time. Saladin attempted a counter-attack but his forces were exhausted from years of warfare. After this battle, a peace treaty was agreed on by Richard and Saladin.

This time the Crusader army came in sight of the great city. However, due to disagreements between its component leaders on how best to proceed – Richard and the bulk of the crusading leaders wanted to force Saladin to hand over Jerusalem by attacking his base of power in Egypt, while the French Duke of Burgundy wished to make a direct attack on the city – they were once more forced to make a tactical retreat. Saladin attempted to punish the Crusaders' indecision by attacking them in a series of harassing running engagements but the army stood strong and following another decisive victory at the Battle of Jaffa on 8 August 1192, both Saladin's and Richard's armies were heavily depleted.

A stalemate of inactivity ensued as it dawned on Richard and Saladin that their positions within Palestine were fragile and that continued fighting was pretty much unattainable. Another bout of negotiations between the two leaders proceeded until a peace treaty was finally agreed upon on 2 September 1192. It decreed that Richard would not take Jerusalem, but it did stipulate that Christian pilgrims and merchants would be now free to enter the Muslim-held city as they wished completely lawfully. This would be how the Third Christian Crusade would come to an end, with Richard soon after heading home from the Holy Land.

The story of Richard's Crusade, however, was not quite over with his departure from Palestine. His ship wrecked near Aquileia, Italy, and forced him to return over land through central Europe. It was during this land voyage that, as he passed by Vienna shortly before Christmas 1192, he was captured by the forces of Leopold V, Duke of Austria, who accused him of arranging the murder of his cousin Conrad of Montferrat by assassins back in the Holy Land. Richard repeatedly protested his innocence but he was ignored by the duke and was imprisoned in Dürnstein Castle – an action that saw him be excommunicated from the Church by the pope in Rome. Regardless of the excommunication, Leopold handed him over to Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, who then held him to ransom, demanding 150,000 marks for the English king's release.

Richard's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, proceeded to raise the large sum, taking almost two years to scrape the money together. Richard was finally freed on 4 February 1194 but it wasn't all good news. Upon returning to England and France, he found that his brother John had tried to take the throne with

Richard versus Saladin

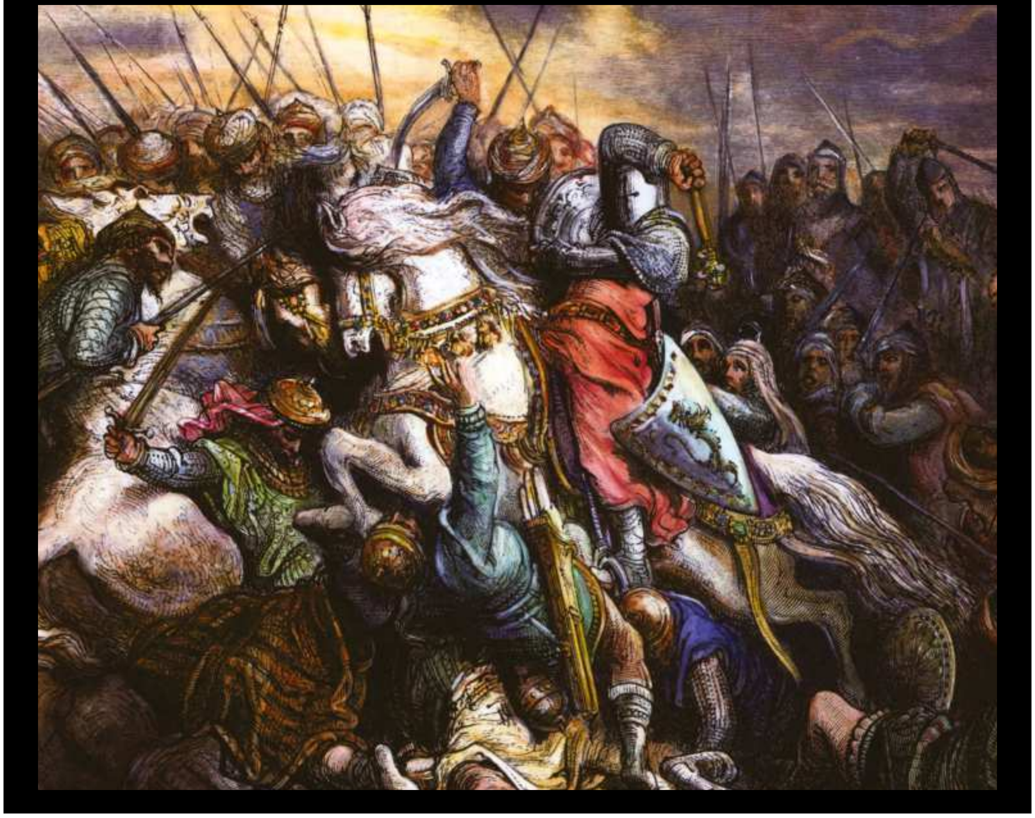
Richard's crusade was one of the most personal of all, with what began as a duel of religions evolving into one between two of history's greatest leaders

While the Third Crusade was one of the most complicated in terms of participants, with everyone from Philip II of France through to the Italian Conrad of Monteferrat and Guy of Lusignan taking up arms to take the Holy Land, it was largely determined and eventually ended by just two men: King Richard I of England and sultan of Syria Saladin. With the pair directing troops, Richard and Saladin clashed more than ten times during the Third Crusade, with both taking or retaking territory in a continuous tug of war throughout the region. In the Battles of Arsuf and Jaffa, both men were active participants in the field, with both winning much renown for their personal combat prowess.

Interestingly, however, while both Richard and Saladin spent much of the Third Crusade directing combat against each other, they were reportedly also great admirers of each other's abilities and met multiple times during the hostilities in attempts to negotiate over matters. In fact, it was through one of these negotiations after the Battle of Jaffa that the Third Crusade finally came to an end.

In the end, Richard agreed to demilitarise the Christian-controlled regions and Saladin ensured that Christian pilgrims and merchants could have access to Jerusalem. Military historians often point to Richard and Saladin's relationship as a key factor in more bloodshed not being spilt as without their conversing, the Third Crusade would surely have been prolonged.

As a footnote, little more than six months after Richard the Lionheart left the Holy Land after the two great men had agreed on a peace treaty, Saladin died of fever on 4 March 1193 in Damascus. As with Richard, who would return slowly to his homeland without wealth or ceremony, Saladin himself died with only one piece of gold and 40 pieces of silver to his name – the rest given away to his subjects or spent on years of war. Clearly, for peace – no matter how temporary – it was a price worth paying.



Timeline

1157

Richard born
Richard is born at Beaumont Palace, Oxford, as the son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He is one of four brothers including Henry, Geoffrey and John.
8 September 1157

Aquitaine gained
Following him turning ten, Richard is invested with the duchy of Aquitaine and then, four years later, the duchy of Poitiers.
1168

Richard argues
After arguing with his brothers, Richard joins his forces with those of his father to subdue Henry, Geoffrey and their rebelling barons.
1179

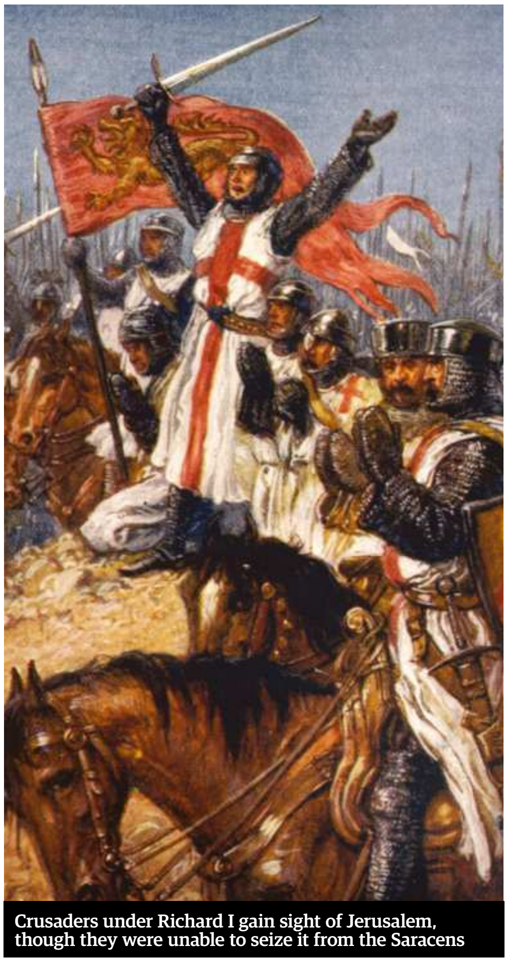
Henry dies
Henry II's rightful heir to the throne – Henry the Young King – dies of dysentery, leaving Richard to become the rightful heir. Three years later Richard's other brother, Geoffrey, dies in a tournament.
1183

Richard crowned
Following the death of Henry II at Chateau Chinon, Richard is crowned King in Westminster Abbey, England.
3 September 1189

Fire sale
Having heard of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, Richard begins raising funds for his Crusade by selling off castles and territory in his control.
11 December 1189

> "Returning to England, he found that his brother had tried to take the throne with the help of the French monarch, Philip"

the help of the French monarch, Philip, and that much of his territory in Normandy had been taken. He immediately began a campaign of reconquest, forming an alliance against King Philip and then beating him in multiple battles throughout the 1190s, the most famous being the Battle of Gisors. It was in this conflict that Richard coined the now famous motto of the British monarchy, 'Dieu et mon Droit', which translates as 'God and my Right' - an indication that the monarch only answers to God.



Crusaders under Richard I gain sight of Jerusalem, though they were unable to seize it from the Saracens

However, this new campaign of conquest would end with Richard's own death, which came from a very unlikely source - a bowman defending the castle of Châlus-Chabrol who managed to loose a lucky shot. Upon his death, Richard was eventually succeeded by his brother John, who would proceed to surrender almost all of Richard's hard-kept territory in mainland Europe and then go on to squander much more power by losing the First Baron's War in 1217, the latter leading to the creation of the Magna Carta. Indeed, following Richard's death on 6 April 1199, no king of England ever held as much power or territory than he did during his reign.

So what of Richard's legacy? One of the most powerful kings of England in the country's long history, Richard had been born into a firmly established - albeit warring - empire where the monarch's position as ruler was unquestionable. He was, as he said himself, answerable to no one but the Christian God and held the military might and privilege to do as he wished on Earth.

Despite the romance surrounding his famous Crusade, as well as the scandalous family politics that coloured his life and his favourable rule when compared to his brother John, it can be easily argued that the legacy left behind by Richard is not necessarily a positive one, with him spending vast sums of his subjects' money on a series of wars either for his own personal gain or in the pursuit of religious zealotry and intolerance.

But perhaps that is to look upon Richard's actions with a modern perspective, one that is wholly unsuitable to decode the motives and mindset of the Medieval world. There is no doubt about it - life and death were very much part of the same blade during Richard's rule, with those who did not adequately defend themselves put to the sword for no fault of their own aside from that they stood in someone else's way. Regardless of his legacy, though, one thing is clear: Richard's actions had a marked effect not just on Europe, but also on the western Middle East too. And it's one that can still be seen today if you look in the right places.

Death in his mother's arms

The climactic events of Richard the Lionheart's death

In March 1199, long after the Third Crusade had come to a close, Richard was back in Limousin, suppressing a revolt against his rule by Viscount Aimar V of Limoges. Burning the count's land and cutting through his troops, Richard finally arrived at the small and barely defended castle of Châlus-Chabrol, and he set about besieging it.

On the evening of 25 March, Richard was walking around the castle's perimeter investigating the progress that his sappers were making on the castle walls. He was walking unarmoured and, despite missiles occasionally being fired down, they were given little attention. Richard was even a little amused by the amateur state of the castle's defenders, applauding when they aimed at him.

For Richard however, this was to be the beginning of the end, with an unseen bowman shooting and hitting him in the left shoulder near the neck. Richard headed to his tent and attempted to remove the bolt. In the end, a surgeon took it out but the wound quickly became gangrenous and upon realising that his life was soon to end, Richard called for the now-captured crossbowman to be brought to him.

The crossbowman was not a man but a boy, who told Richard that he had acted out of revenge for the death of his father and two brothers, both of whom had been killed by the king's forces. Expecting to be executed, the boy was surprised by the weak and dying King Richard who, in what was to be his last act of mercy on Earth, forgave the boy and pardoned him. He famously said, "Live on, and by my bounty behold the light of day."

Less than two weeks later, King Richard the Lionheart died from his wound at the age of 41, his mother - the long-lived Eleanor of Aquitaine - holding him as he passed. After his death, his entrails were buried at Châlus, his body at the feet of his father's at Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou and his heart in Rouen in Normandy.

Crusade begins
King Richard finally embarks on his Crusade, setting sail for the Holy Land. His first port of call is Sicily, arriving at Messina two months later.
4 July 1190

Queen maker
Richard marries Queen Berengaria of Navarre, the first-born daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre at Lemesos, Cyprus.
12 May 1191

Richard captured
After travelling back from his crusade, Richard is captured by the Duke of Austria, who he had supposedly offended during the Siege of Acre. He pays a ransom and is freed.
1192

1199

Richard dies
At the age of just 42, Richard the Lionheart dies at Chalus. His body is buried at Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou, while his heart is buried in Rouen in Normandy.
6 April 1199

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1166-1216

King John

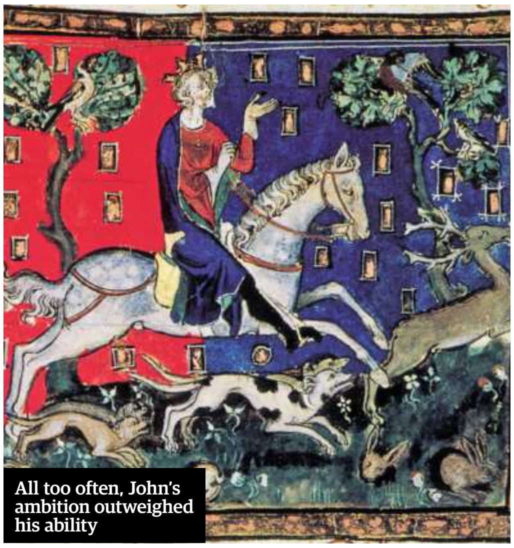
King John is a monarch with a reputation for cowardice and failure – but is this really fair?

Written by Catherine Curzon

John Lackland, better known to history as King John, was born around 1166 as the youngest son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He was the brother of Richard I, the Lionheart, and he had ruthless ambition to spare.

When Richard joined the Crusades, he did so knowing that his brother was likely to make a grab for the crown. In order to satisfy John during his absence, Richard awarded him vast tracts of land in return for John's promise that he would keep away from England. John agreed and power was entrusted to the care of William Longchamp, the bishop of Ely. Yet John had no intention of keeping his word.

Upon hearing that Richard had been captured, John made his move. He exploited Longchamp's unpopularity to his own advantage and by 1191, had seized control of London. Upon hearing this, Richard sent Walter de Coutances, archbishop of Rouen, to mediate between Longchamp and John. In reply, John entered into an alliance with King Philip II of France that he hoped would provide him with the muscle to seize the English throne. Despite John's offer to abandon his wife in favour of Philip's sister in order to prove his loyalty, his efforts met with armed opposition in England and by the time Richard returned in 1194, John's hopes of a coup were in tatters.


All too often, John's ambition outweighed his ability

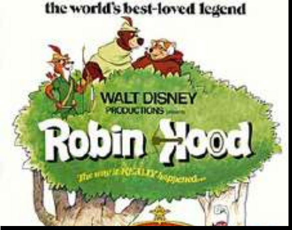
Richard forgave his brother for his betrayal and laid the blame at the door of John's advisers. Though he took away the majority of John's territories as a punishment, Richard did name him as his rightful heir. In 1199, Richard died and John was finally crowned king. In addition to the English throne he also inherited Richard's French territories, but his foothold in France was painfully brief. John became infatuated with Isabella, Countess of Angoulême, and his decision to marry her caused consternation in France. It was the start of a disastrous period for John's interests in France.

Complaints about the king's mismanagement of his French lands reached the ear of Philip II and John was summoned to the French court to account for himself. He refused to attend and soon England and France were at war again. The result was a swift defeat for John as the once mighty House of Angevin lost Normandy, Anjou, Maine and most of its Poitou territory to the French.

With John now confined to England, he became fixated on winning back his lost domains. To raise the necessary funds he introduced a number of unpopular taxes, the foundation of his later depiction as a money-hungry tyrant. This was also the flashpoint for conflict with the barons, who felt that the king had disenfranchised them with his greed. The result was the Barons' War, by which Stephen Langton, who had been appointed archbishop of Canterbury against John's wishes, led a rebellion against the king.

In the midst of the ensuing civil war, the rebels were successful in seizing London, forcing John to turn to diplomacy. The result was the Magna Carta, a document that limited the monarch's power, clearly established the feudal rights of the barons and laid down fundamental statutes of English law. Although both sides hoped the Magna Carta would end the fighting, John was not willing to be confined by its terms. The civil war raged on as John was confronted not only by English rebels, but by Prince Louis of France, whom the barons invited to join their cause.

The war was still raging when the king died in 1216, leaving behind a bleak reputation. Yet John


Join the MERRIEST MENagerie in the world's best-loved legend
WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS presents
Robin Hood
The way it REALLY happened
Disney's *Robin Hood* taught generations of children that King John was a thumb-sucking cowardly lion!

King John in fiction

From Robin Hood to Ivanhoe, King John has become a baddie to be reckoned with

Few English monarchs have seen their reputations take such a battering as King John. He is the quintessential snivelling younger brother, a black-hearted villain and a tyrant intent on accumulating power by whatever means necessary.

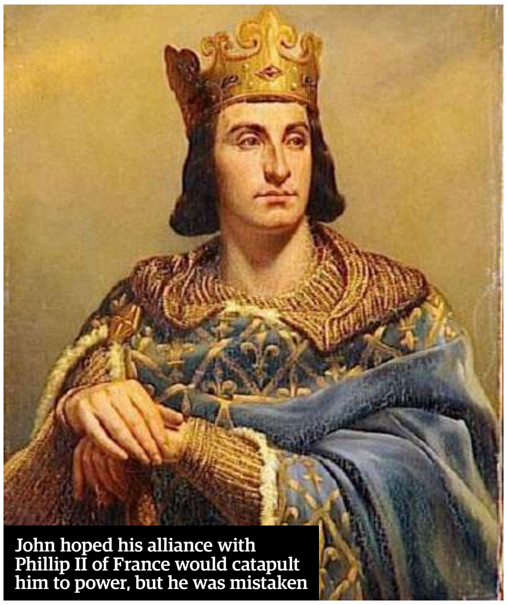
By far the most influential depiction of King John can be found in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, where he is imagined as a treacherous warmonger, hungry for land and power and terrified of his noble, crusading sibling. This has become John's enduring image and when Howard Pyle immortalised him as the villain of his book, *The Merry Adventures Of Robin Hood*, his reputation was well and truly ruined.

It is as Robin Hood's tireless persecutor that John is best remembered and as cinema flourished and silver screen retellings of the myth became popular, King John's supposed vanity, tyranny and wickedness found a whole new audience. Often depicted as a cowardly bully who flinched from combat in favour of duplicitous scheming, John was even shown in Disney's adaptation as a thumb-sucking cowardly lion, the polar opposite of his Lionheart brother. To this day, he is depicted as a quintessential Hollywood villain and with new tellings of the Robin Hood legend in the works, it is a legacy that looks set to endure.

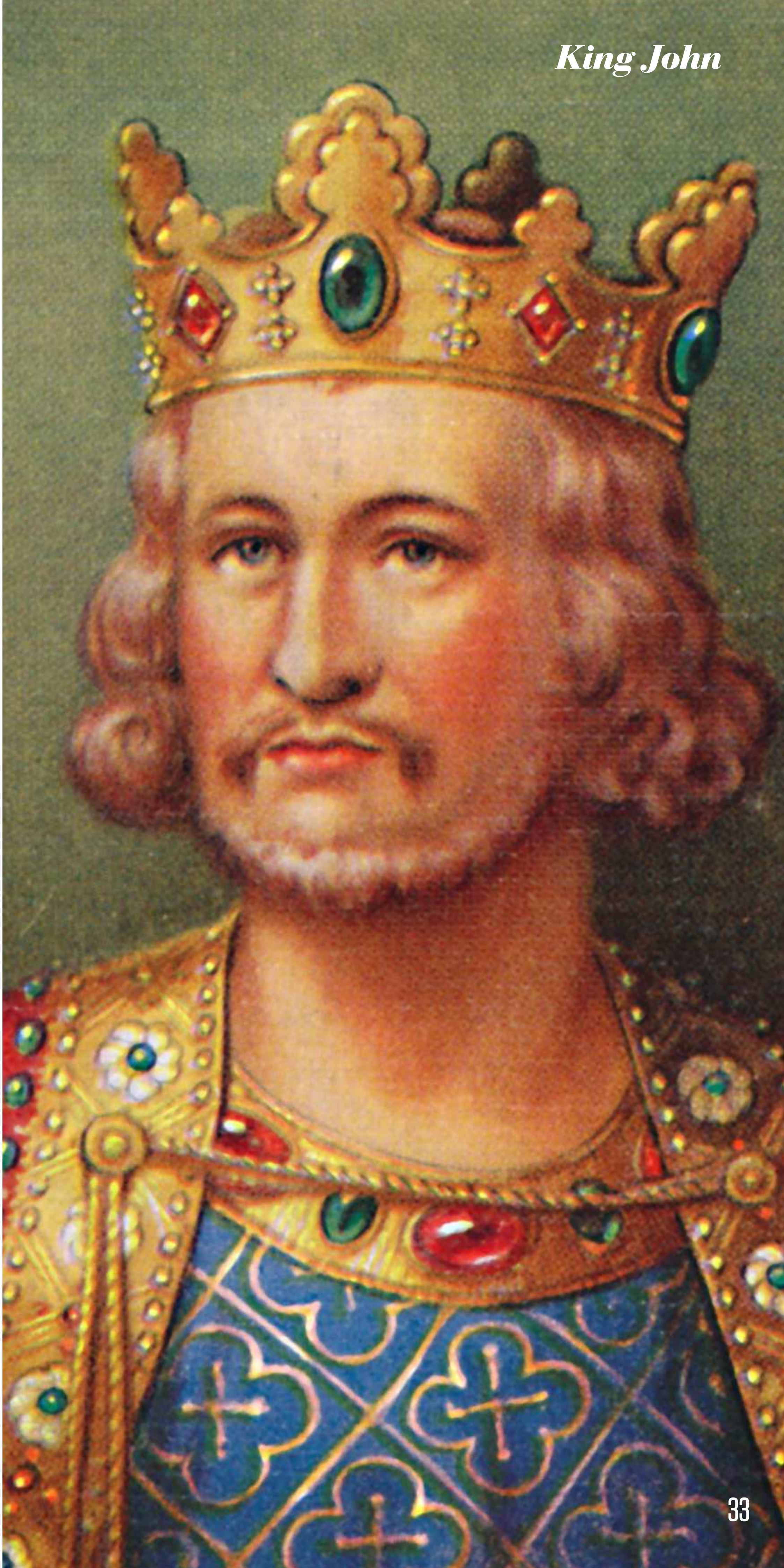
> “Ultimately John lacked the self-knowledge to govern his own excesses. His disastrous campaigns in France were expensive and doomed to failure”

wasn’t the tyrannical villain that history remembers him as. It’s true that he was a man to whom loyalty was a foreign concept, whilst his efforts at diplomacy were usually accompanied by a healthy dose of backhandedness. However, he also took pains to learn as much as he could about the country he ruled. He learned to speak English, unlike his Norman predecessors, and took a keen personal interest in matters of government.

Ultimately, John lacked the self-knowledge to govern his own excesses. His disastrous campaigns in France were expensive and doomed to failure, while his quarrels with the Church were so extreme as to result in a temporary excommunication. His tempestuous reign was marked by conflict at home and overseas. Caught between England and France, more used to duplicity than diplomacy, King John was certainly ill-suited to the challenges he faced. Frequently travelling, he even lost his crown jewels when his baggage train sank in the Wash as he attempted to avoid a confrontation with East Anglian rebels. It seems like a fitting final act for the king who had, at every turn, faced obstacles that he had struggled to overcome.

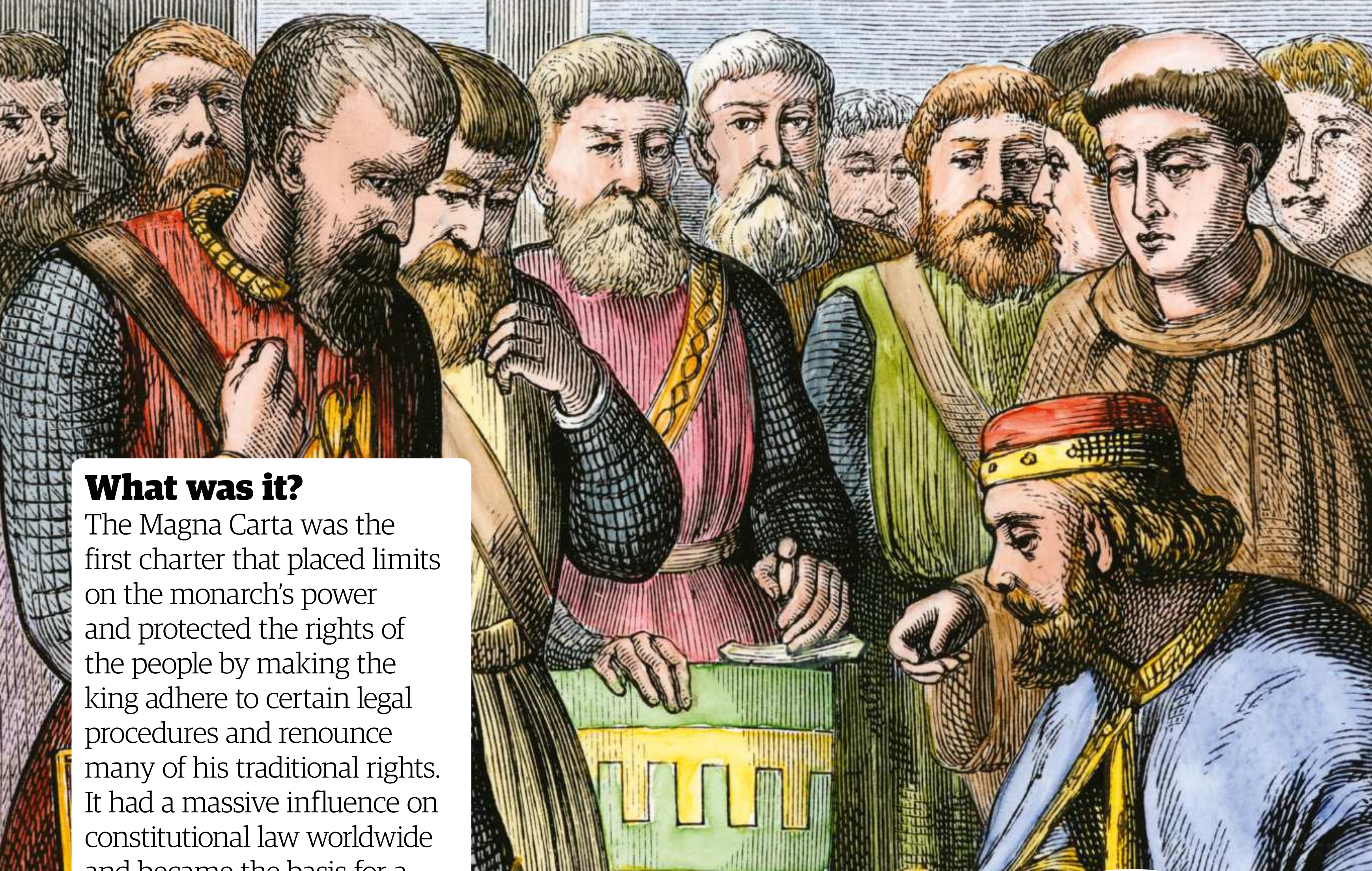


John hoped his alliance with Phillip II of France would catapult him to power, but he was mistaken



Bluffer's Guide ENGLAND, 1215

The Magna Carta



What was it?

The Magna Carta was the first charter that placed limits on the monarch's power and protected the rights of the people by making the king adhere to certain legal procedures and renounce many of his traditional rights. It had a massive influence on constitutional law worldwide and became the basis for a host of constitutions, including that of the United States.

When was it?

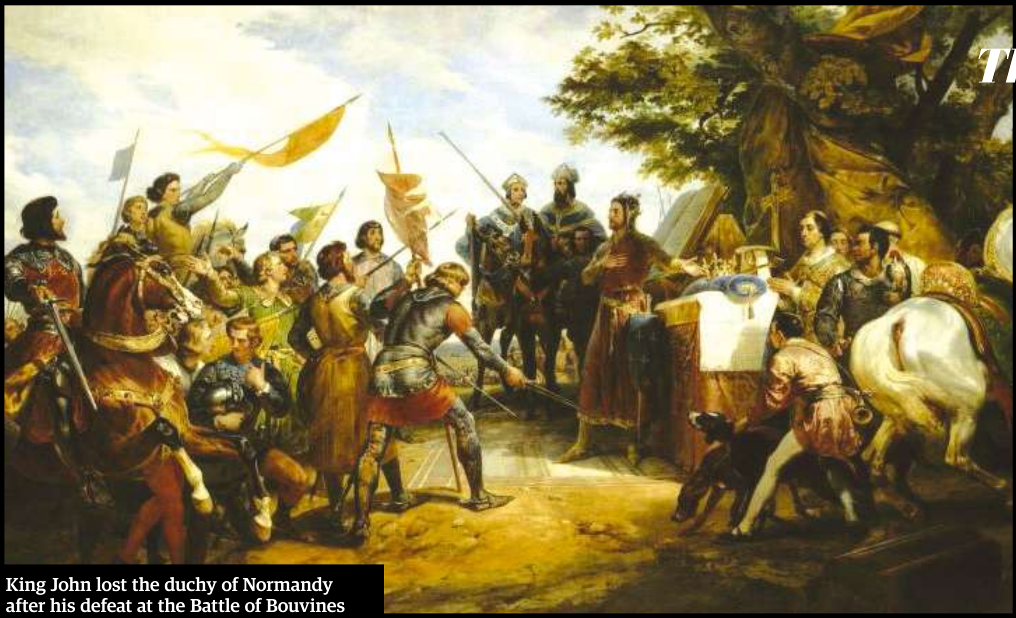
Sealed on 15 June 1215, the charter was preceded by English King Henry I's Charter of Liberties in 1100. However, the pope renounced the Magna Carta in August of 1215, deeming it "unlawful and unjust". After King John's son Henry III came into power, the Magna Carta was reissued in 1225 and gained widespread support.

Where was it signed?

King John didn't sign the Magna Carta; he sealed it with his Great Seal, a wax seal in a metal mould that was attached to documents to indicate the king's approval. The most likely location for the sealing was the water meadow at Runnymede, as it lay about halfway between the barons' headquarters in Staines and the king's palace at Windsor.

TO
COMMEMORAT
MAGNA CART
SYMBOL OF
FREEDOM
UNDER
LAW

A memorial to the Magna Carta was erected in Runnymede, Surrey, in 1957



King John lost the duchy of Normandy after his defeat at the Battle of Bouvines

Why was it created?

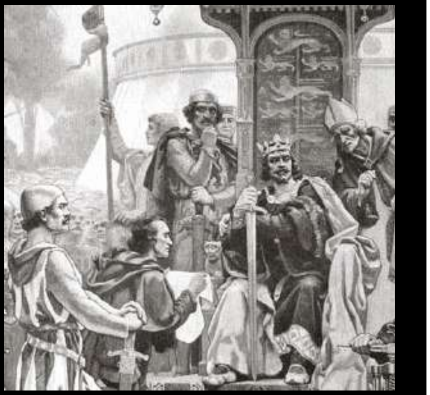
King John had suffered a number of military defeats abroad, but still demanded men and money from the barons. He also fell out with the Church and the pope banned all church services and excommunicated King John. The barons rebelled and the Magna Carta was created to end the dispute.

Is it still in use today?

Much of the Magna Carta dealt with very specific personal grievances that are no longer relevant today. Out of the document's 63 clauses, only three are still valid. The first ensures the liberties of the English Church, the second confirms the rights of the cities of England, and the third is the famous 'free man' clause.

How many copies are there?

Numerous copies of the Magna Carta were penned by royal scribes to send to religious and legal figures, although it's impossible to ascertain just how many. Four versions of the charter still exist today - one is in Salisbury Cathedral, another in Lincoln Cathedral and the last two are in the British Library.

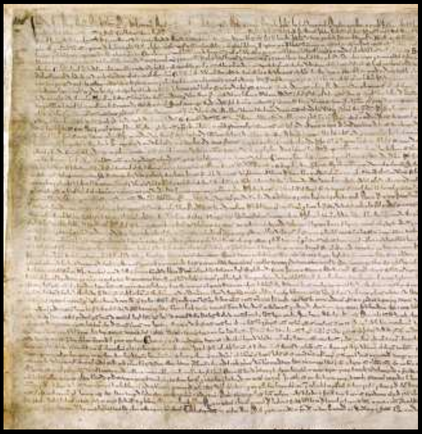


A baron's life

The barons of feudal England owned large amounts of land and answered only to the king. The king could demand payment from them for multiple reasons, such as the marriage of his eldest daughter and "scutage" if they refused military service. King John pushed these privileges to breaking point. Robert Fitzwalter, the baron of Little Dunmow, Essex, used his influence in London to gain support for the baron uprising.

Standing the test of time

The importance of the Magna Carta extends far past the 1215 and 1225 versions; it was used time and time again throughout the reigns of British monarchs. Edward I, II, III as well as Richard II, Charles I, James II and countless others all felt the direct effects of the charter upon their reigns.



There is still great debate over the true meaning of many of the clauses of the charter

A tricky read

Not only is the Magna Carta written in Medieval Latin, but the scribes who created copies of the document made many abbreviations of words in order to use less of the expensive parchment. There is also evidence that it was written with some haste and changed often so everyone's grievances could be met, making it a challenging and somewhat confusing read.

Key events

Charter of Liberties

1100

A precursor to the Magna Carta, binding King Henry I to laws for his treatment of individuals.

England interdicted

1208

After King John refuses to accept the new archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Innocent III suspends all church services in England.

Battle of Bouvines

27 July 1214

This battle ends the 1202-14 Anglo-French War with a French victory and costs the barons their possessions in Normandy.

Demanding scutage

1215

John tries to regain his losses by demanding 40 shillings for every man the barons failed to provide for the war.

The barons rebel

1215

The angry barons band their forces together and march south, denouncing their allegiance to the king.

Key figures

King John

1166-1216

John's exploitation of the barons' money led to the creation of the Magna Carta.

Pope Innocent III

1160-1216

The head of the Catholic Church, he ended all church services in England and cancelled the Magna Carta shortly after it was written.

Archbishop Stephen Langton

1150-1228

Archbishop Langton mediated between the warring forces and heavily influenced the contents of the charter.

William Marshal

1147-1219

Marshal ruled England until John's son came of age, and created two revised Magna Cartas in 1216 and 1217.

Robert Fitzwalter

Unknown-1235

Fitzwalter was the leader of the barons who rebelled against King John and one of the 25 sureties of the Magna Carta.

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THE PLANTAGENETS

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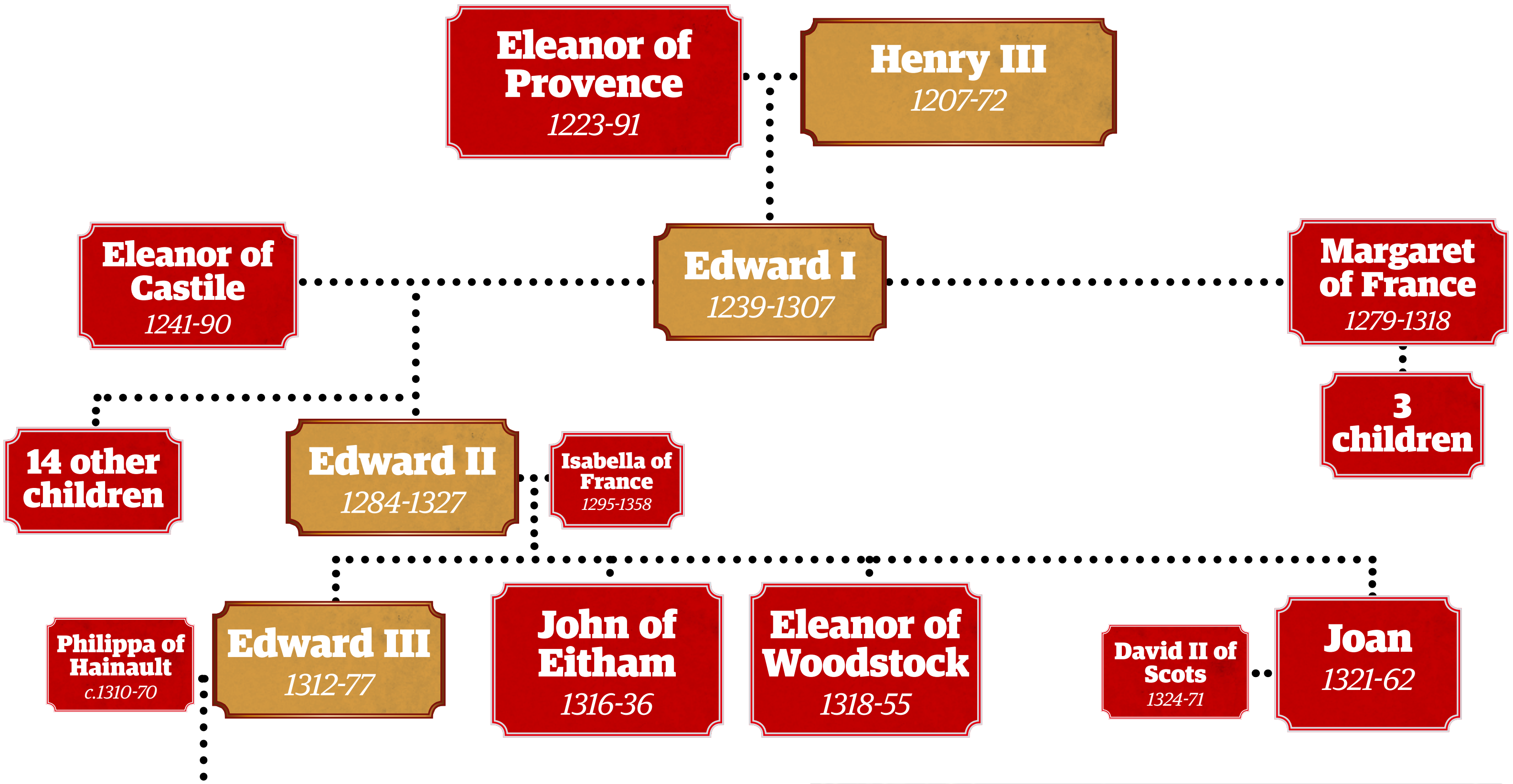
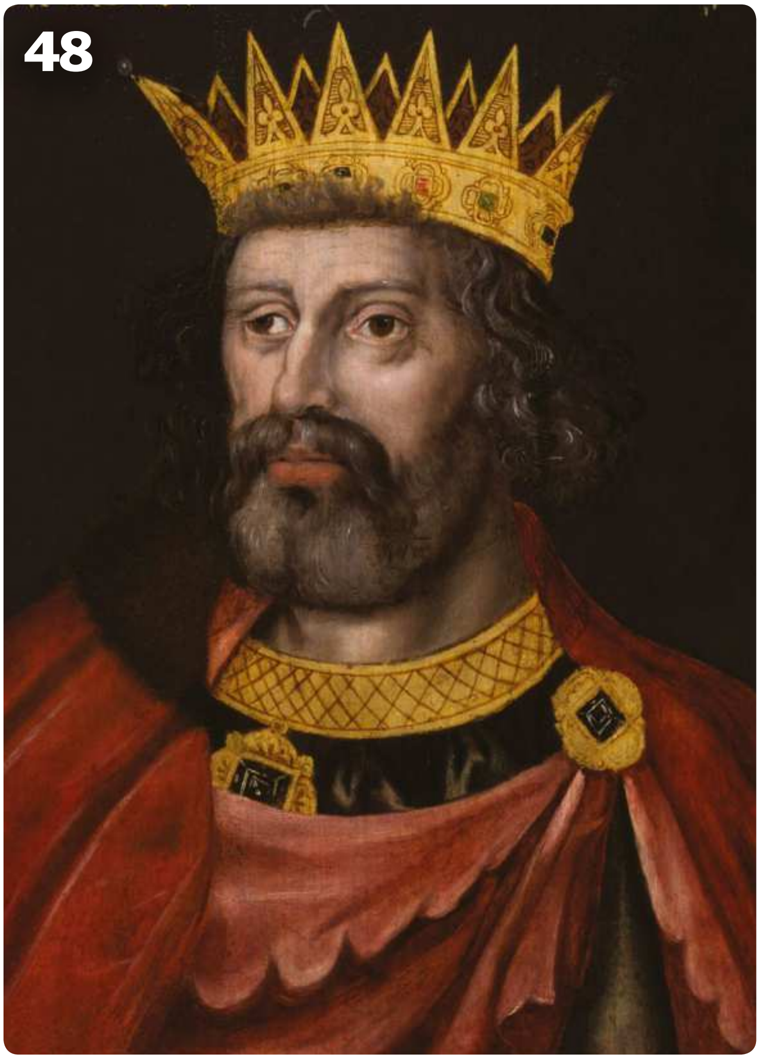

Eleanor of Provence
1223-91
Henry III
1207-72
Eleanor of Castile
1241-90
Edward I
1239-1307
Margaret of France
1279-1318
3 children
14 other children
Edward II
1284-1327
Isabella of France
1295-1358
Philippa of Hainault
c.1310-70
Edward III
1312-77
John of Eitham
1316-36
Eleanor of Woodstock
1318-55
David II of Scots
1324-71
Joan
1321-62
Edward the Black Prince
1330-76
Joan
1328-85
Richard II
1367-1400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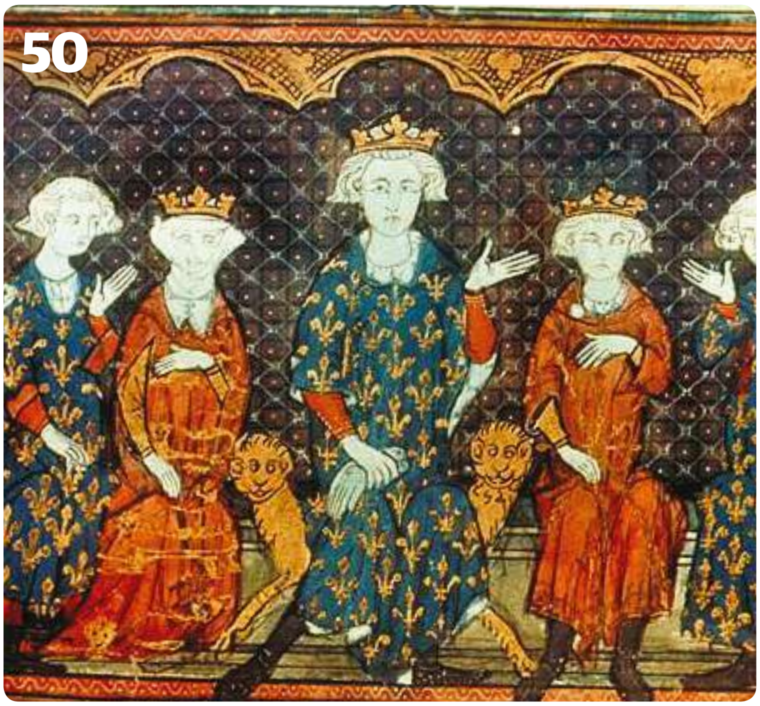
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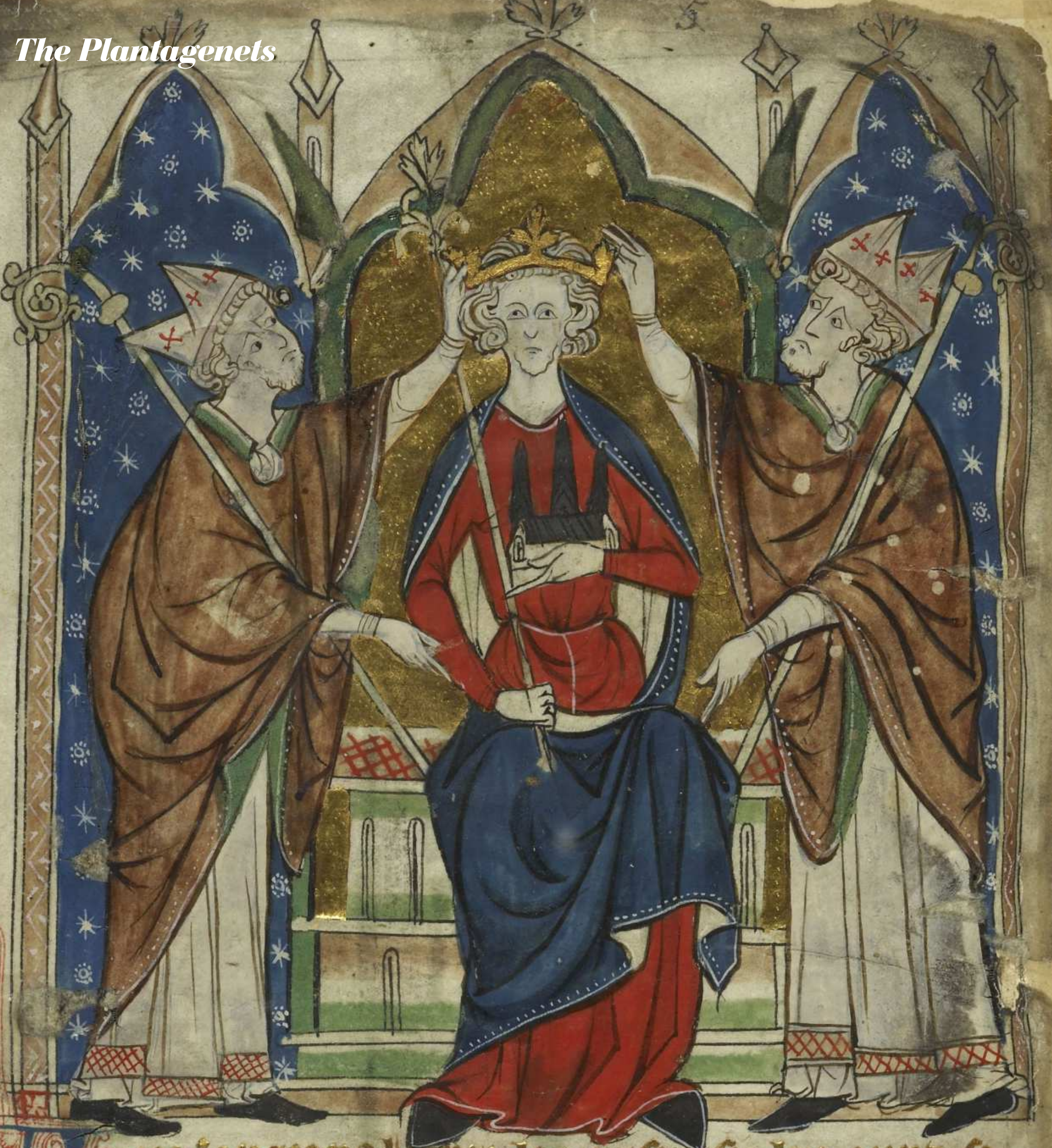
The Plantagenets



Apres Jon regna henry le terz ſun fiz .lvi. aunz. ſi fuſt de .ix. aunz de age quant fuſt corone. E en ſun tenſ fuſt la bataylle de Eueſhm̃. ou fuſt occys ſyr Symund de munfort. e ſun fiz henry. e ſyre hugh le deſpenſer e muz des baronſ e des chevalers de Engletere. Puiſ mouruſt cyl henry le roy. e giſt a Weſtmuſter.

1207-72

Henry III

The son of Bad King John inherited a kingdom in anarchy and would devote his rule to restoring the family name

Written by Alicea Francis

It's a sad truth that a man who wanted desperately to be remembered has largely been forgotten. Though Henry III's reign was long and eventful, it failed to be immortalised by the likes of Shakespeare, unlike so many other Medieval kings. And today, he rarely features in popular culture. Perhaps, with a father like Bad King John, Henry didn't stand much of a chance of achieving the greatness he so deeply desired. He spent the majority of his reign fruitlessly trying to reinstate peace in England, adopting the Anglo-Saxon king Edward the Confessor as his patron saint in the hope that he could emulate the way in which Edward had reunited his people two centuries earlier. And then, of course, there was Henry's futile dream of restoring his grandfather's Angevin Empire…

Henry was born on 1 October 1207, and was crowned upon his father's death at the age of just nine, in the midst of the First Barons' War. The conflict had broken out thanks to King John's refusal to accept the Magna Carta – a charter that served to give greater control and protection to England's major landowners, the barons. The rebel barons had turned to Louis, the crown prince of France, for assistance, who soon conquered half of England and illegally declared himself king. With London occupied by the French, on 28 October 1216 the young Henry was crowned in Gloucester Cathedral, using one of his mother Isabella's headdresses as the royal crown had been lost by his father during the war.

Upon his deathbed, John had granted guardianship of Henry to William Marshal, one of England's most famous and respected knights. William was placed at the head of the regency government and in a popular move, promised to rule by the Magna Carta. Slowly, he won over the barons, and when the French were defeated by Henry's naval forces at the Battle of Sandwich on 24 August 1217, a peace treaty was agreed with Louis. He would renounce his claim to the English throne and in return was granted £6,666 to speed up his departure.

Marshal, having served four generations of Plantagenets with great ability, died in May 1219, and Hubert de Burgh – Henry's justiciar, who had commanded the English fleet at Sandwich – was announced as his replacement. It appeared that Henry's fortunes were only continuing to improve under the new government, as the unruly Welsh prince Llywelyn and the remaining rebel barons were soon suppressed. Henry reached his majority in 1227 and assumed formal control of his government, retaining de Burgh as his chief advisor.

> Given as royal gifts, Henry III is said to have kept exotic animals in the Tower of London, including an elephant and a polar bear

With peace now restored in England – for now, at least – the 19-year-old king turned his attentions towards France.

It had been Henry's grandfather, Henry II, who had secured the western half of France for the English empire. Much of these lands had been lost by King John, however, and Henry was determined to win them back. Conveniently for him, Louis – who had been crowned in 1223 – died just three years later, leaving his 12-year-old son Louis IX to inherit the throne. The new king faced much opposition from the French nobility and in 1228, a group of Norman and Angevin rebels called on Henry to invade and

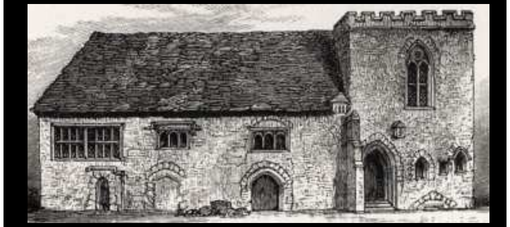
The Statute of Jewry

Henry's anti-Jewish policies fuelled the fire of the civil war

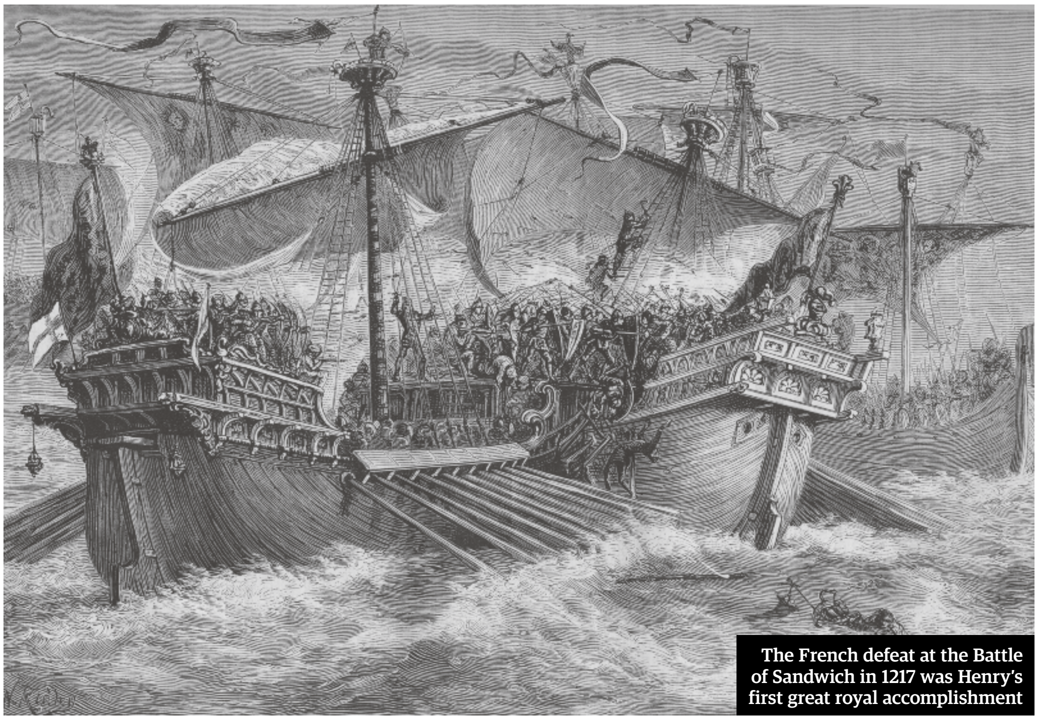
In the early years of Henry's reign, the Jewish community in England prospered. Since the time of the Norman conquest, the Jews had played a small but vital role in the economy, as unlike Christians they were permitted to act as moneylenders. The regency government had much to gain from protecting them against anti-Semitism, as they provided a source of cheap loans and easy taxation.

However, in 1239, Henry's policies changed – possibly in response to pressure from the pope, who insisted that Jews wear badges to identify themselves. Jewish leaders were imprisoned and forced to pay huge fines, destroying their ability to take part in commercial moneylending. It also meant that Jews had to force the repayment of loans, which fuelled anti-Semitism.

The Statute of Jewry, issued in 1253, stated that no more synagogues could be constructed, banned Christians from "abiding" with Jews in their houses, and forced Jews to pay duties to the churches. Efforts to convert them to Christianity were accelerated and by the late 1250s, as many as ten per cent had done so – largely due to their deteriorating economic conditions. Henry's anti-Jewish policies were largely resented by the barons, and contributed to the outbreak of the Second Barons' War.



The Domus Conversorum provided a communal home for Jews who had converted to Christianity



The French defeat at the Battle of Sandwich in 1217 was Henry's first great royal accomplishment

reclaim his inheritance. But Henry's invasion plans progressed slowly, and when his army eventually arrived in France in 1230, the campaign was a failure.

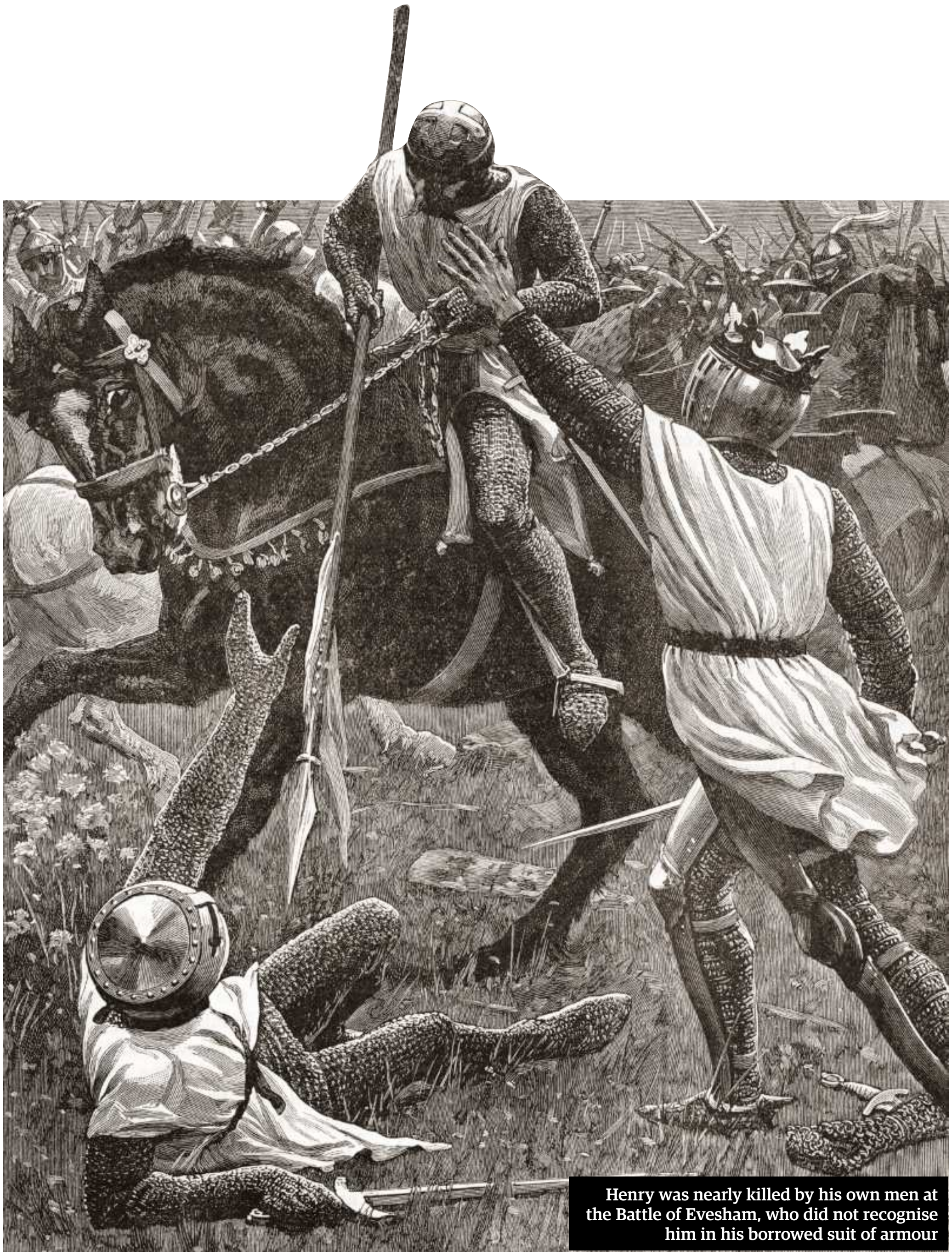
In an effort to form an alliance with the duke of Brittany, whose fiefdom he could then use as a base from which to attack Normandy, he promised to marry the duke's daughter Yolande. But Blanche, queen of France, recognised the threat and instead had Yolande betrothed to one of her own sons. Henry then pledged himself to Joan of Ponthieu, but again, the marriage was intercepted. Finally, in 1236, he married 12-year-old Eleanor of Provence, creating a powerful alliance with rulers in the south of France. Despite her youth, Eleanor was politically minded and determined, and insisted that her Savoyard relatives join her in England. Eleanor's uncle, Boniface, became archbishop of Canterbury and another uncle, William, was made Henry's chief advisor. Henry arranged for many of them to marry into the English nobility, which created new frictions with the barons, who did not want land passing into the hands of foreigners.

Declining popularity

The situation was further inflamed by Henry's patronage of his French relatives on his mother's side, the Lusignans. In 1241, the barons in Poitou, including his stepfather, Hugh de Lusignan, rebelled against the rule of Louis of France. The rebels were counting on assistance from Henry, but he lacked support at home and was slow to mobilise an army. Once again, the campaign was a failure, and French power extended throughout Poitou, threatening the interests of the Lusignans. Henry persuaded them to relocate to England and bestowed them with large estates, mainly at the expense of the barons. Hatred towards these powerful foreigners in England grew and to make matters worse, a fierce rivalry broke out between the well-established Savoyards and the newly arrived Lusignans.

In 1250, Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire died, leaving the kingdom of Sicily in a weakened position. As he was famed for his public demonstrations of piety, Henry had great plans to wage a crusade in the Holy Land. Sicily would provide an excellent base from which to do so. With financial backing from Pope Innocent IV, a long-time rival of the Holy Roman Empire, Henry sent an army to seize Sicily from Frederick's son Manfred in 1254. However, just months later Innocent died, and Alexander IV succeeded him. With mounting pressure from his enemies, Alexander declared that he could no longer afford to fund the campaign,

A gilt-bronze effigy of Henry III on his tomb in Westminster Abbey



Henry was nearly killed by his own men at the Battle of Evesham, who did not recognise him in his borrowed suit of armour

Westminster Abbey restoration

Henry was responsible for the Gothic styling at the religious heart of London

Henry's reign may have been marred by military and political failures, but one area where he did achieve success was in his building projects, and he has been described as "the most obsessive patron of art and architecture ever to have occupied the throne of England". Henry travelled much less than his predecessors, preferring to remain at home with his beloved children, and therefore paid more attention to the restoration and upkeep of his palaces. It's also likely that he wanted to compete with his French rivals, who were achieving great architectural feats, including the construction of Notre-Dame de Paris.

Henry spent £55,000 (around £20 million in today's money) rebuilding his favourite palace, Westminster, which included the rebuilding of the abbey in the new Gothic style. The eastern section, including the intricate Cosmati pavement, dates from his reign. An early stained glass shield with his arms is now in St Edmund's chapel window, and a 13th-century carved shield remains in the choir aisle together with those of other benefactors to the work.

Henry rebuilt Westminster Abbey in the new Gothic style, as visible from this richly ornamented vaulting

and even demanded that Henry repay the £90,000 he had already spent, threatening him with excommunication. The English parliament refused to assist the king in raising the money, so instead Henry decided to turn to the Church coffers – a move that proved to be deeply unpopular.

The Sicilian business, along with anger over the influence of the Lusignans at court, led to fresh revolt. In April 1258, seven major English and Savoyard barons formed an alliance to expel their Poitevin rivals, and on 30 April, Roger Bigod marched into Westminster during a parliamentary meeting and carried out a coup d'etat. Henry was forced to pass a set of measures known as the Provisions of Oxford. This would create a council of 15 members, elected solely by the barons, which then had the power to appoint England's justiciar, chancellor and treasurer. Chief among these was Henry's brother-in-law, the French-born Simon de Montfort. Over the next four years, neither Henry nor the barons were able to restore stability in England, and power swung back and forth between the different factions. The king attempted a counter-coup, but by early 1263, Henry's authority had disintegrated and the country slipped back towards civil war.

The Second Barons' War broke out in April 1264, when Henry led an army into de Montfort's territories. The two sides met at the Battle of Lewes on 14 May, and Henry suffered a humiliating defeat. He, his brother Richard and his eldest son Edward were captured, and de Montfort seized control of the government, ruling in the name of the king. But in May 1265, Edward managed to escape and raise a new army. At the Battle of Evesham in August that year, Edward was triumphant and de Montfort was slayed, his body cut into pieces by the victors. Henry, who had been travelling with de Montfort's army as a captive, only just managed to lift his visor in time to avoid being killed by one of Edward's soldiers.

Rebuilding peace

Henry was back on the throne, and the last of the rebels surrendered in 1267, marking the end of the war. He spent the final years of his reign attempting to cling onto peace, as well as overseeing the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey and the reburial of Edward the Confessor into a lavish new shrine. Henry's son Edward was made steward of England and with his father unwell, he departed for the Eighth Crusade in 1270. Henry was still determined to fulfil his wish to fight in the Holy Land but ill health prevented him and on 16 November 1272, he finally succumbed to death.

He was buried in Westminster Abbey in front of the church's high altar, in Edward the Confessor's former resting place. He probably had hopes that he too would be recognised as a saint, and a few years later, his wife Eleanor had a grander tomb built for him. Reports of miracles occurring at the tomb began to emerge, but the new king Edward was sceptical and he was never canonised. Henry had spent his reign so determined to redeem his father's failures and make a name for himself, but ironically, it was his father's name and not his own that would go down in history.

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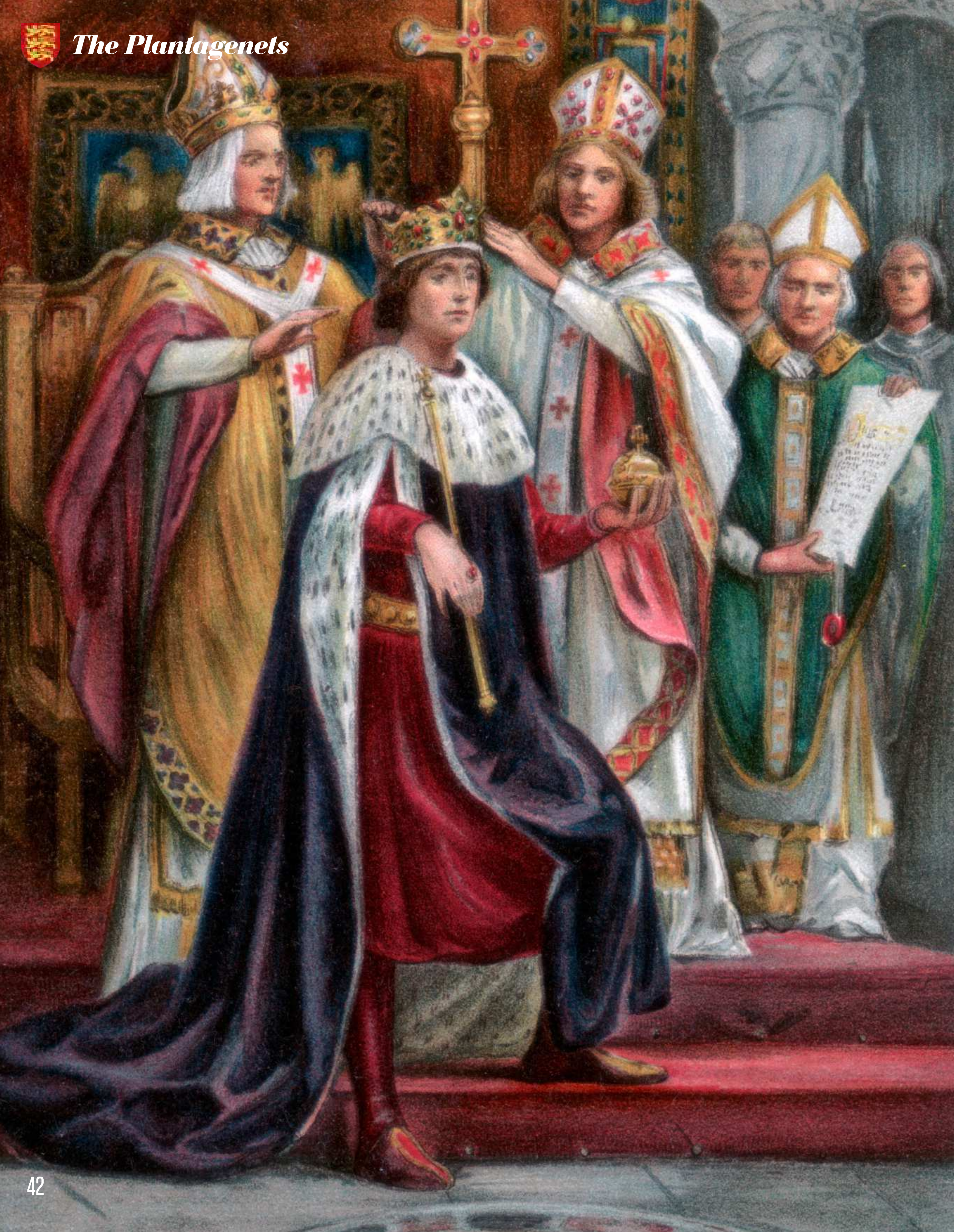


1239-1307

Edward I

He was the king who conquered Wales and came so close to ruling Scotland. Edward's rule was one marked by contrasting fortunes, conflict and a rapidly changing England

Written by Edoardo Albert

Edward was born on 17 June 1239 at the Palace of Westminster. His place of birth was no accident. Edward's father, King Henry III, was devoted to the cult of Edward the Confessor, king and saint, and wanted the saint's intercession for the labour of his queen, Eleanor of Provence. Henry, the scion of the Norman conquerors of England, gave his first-born the name Edward. The sound of it sat uneasily on the tongues of a royal family who spoke French and gave their children good Norman names such as William and Robert. But Henry identified himself completely with the king he venerated: both had been abandoned by their mothers, neither had the martial skills valued by their contemporaries, both were deeply religious. So Edward it was: an English name for a French king.

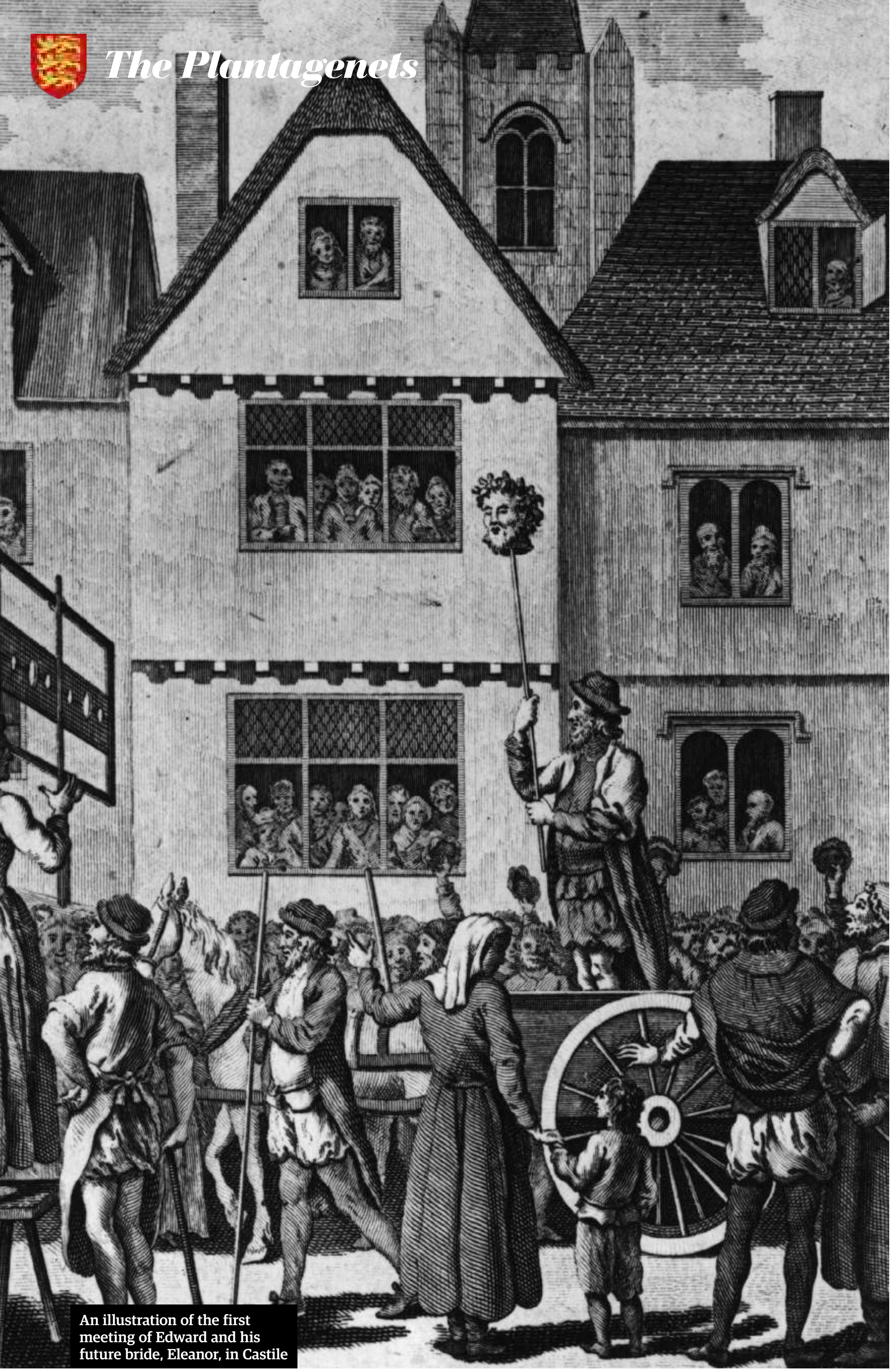
The country, naturally, rejoiced. Henry let it be known to his magnates that presents might be suitable tokens of their delight: rich presents. Inspecting the subsequent gifts, Henry returned those he deemed insufficient, leading one nobleman to complain, "God gave us this child, but the king is selling him to us." This was typical of Henry: a personally kind man completely without the penchant for violence common among the nobility of the time - he didn't even hunt - he nevertheless had an uncommon ability to turn even the best news to his disadvantage.

Henry III was king of England, lord of Ireland and duke of Aquitaine from the tender age of nine years old

A kingdom in flux

Henry was a doting father and Edward a healthy and, by the time he'd reached his teens, a strapping son. As mark of his son's manhood, Henry had given into Edward's lordship Gascony, his prize territory in France, as well as Ireland, his lands in Wales and various castles. But while Edward ruled these in name, Henry retained control in fact. Which might have been fine if Henry was a competent king with a pliant son. But Henry was manifestly incompetent and Edward was sure he could govern these domains better than his father. It was not a recipe for harmony.

Neither was his father's failure to control his barons or his favoured French half-brothers. This brew of competing powers stoked up the resentments that led to what is called the Second Barons' War of 1264 to 1267 but was actually a full-on civil war. Before the war proper broke out, Edward had actually stated his support for the barons'



An illustration of the first meeting of Edward and his future bride, Eleanor, in Castile

"To cement English control, Edward began the construction of a series of castles, including Caernarfon, Conwy, Beaumaris and Harlech castles, a ring of stone around northern Wales"

reforms and for their leader, his uncle by marriage, Simon de Montfort (Simon was married to Henry's sister, another Eleanor). But when it seemed that the barons would wrest control of the country from his father - and, in prospect, from him - Edward switched to the royalist cause.

The royalist army met Simon de Montfort's forces at the Battle of Lewes on 14 May 1264. Edward led the cavalry on the right wing and charged the enemy, putting them to flight. But Edward pursued his routing foes across country, leaving the battle behind, only to find when he returned that the battle had been lost and the king, his father, defeated. In the tense negotiations that followed, Edward was given as hostage into Simon's keeping. Henry remained king by title, but power lay with Simon. He was, in all but name, the new ruler of England.

Edward remained hostage for a year but then, in May 1265, he escaped his captors. He'd been allowed some visitors and they all went out riding, together with the guards watching Edward. Being young men, they rode hard, swapping mounts and tiring out all the horses, except one. Then, with the animals all blown, Edward leaped astride the fresh horse and galloped away, crying, "Lordings, I bid you good day! Greet my father well, and tell him I hope to see him soon, to release him from custody!"

Edward joined with his allies and marched after Simon de Montfort. Simon kept his army moving, waiting for reinforcements, but on 4 August 1265, the royalist forces managed to corner him in Evesham, in a loop of the River Avon.

Normally, nobility were not killed in Medieval battles. They were captured, imprisoned, ransomed and released. But before the battle began, Edward told his men that no surrenders were to be accepted. He gave special orders to 12 picked knights: they were to be a kill squad and search out Simon de Montfort on the battlefield.

For his part, Simon had won against the odds at Lewes. He rode out from Evesham as a thunderstorm cracked the sky and charged up the hill to where Edward was waiting.

The battle turned into a slaughter. Simon's knights were pulled from their horses and stabbed as they lay on the ground. Simon himself was killed when a lance pierced his neck. Then his enemies fell upon him, hacking off hands, feet and head, and in a final act of savagery, cutting his genitals off and putting them in his mouth. Few survived. One man, dressed in Montfortian armour, about to be run through, cried, "I am Henry of Winchester, your king! Do not kill me!"

The return of Edward

So Henry, whom Simon had been holding prisoner, escaped the slaughter and, having been saved by his son, took up the reigns of kingship again. It took a further two years to pacify the country, by which time Edward had turned his sights on a more distant prize. With his father secure on the throne, he would go on Crusade.

When Edward returned in 1274, he was king. Over the next 15 years, Edward, in partnership with his chancellor Robert Burnell, transformed the legislation governing England. Burnell was a churchman, a gifted politician who could get along with everyone - sometimes a little too well; despite being in holy orders, he fathered five children. Edward trusted him

A reconstruction of how Harlech Castle would have looked. The architect, James of St George, utilised every natural feature to make his castles more secure

so completely that, on dispatching Burnell abroad on diplomatic missions, he gave the chancellor absolute authority to act in the king's name. Burnell was probably responsible for the detail of the legislation, which included much law to safeguard tenants against landlords, the registration of debt and the settlement of wills, but Burnell could not have acted without Edward's support. The king had seen the support Simon de Montfort had gained from promising to improve the way law was administered and now, as king, Edward was determined to push through reforms himself. It's notable that the harshness and inflexibility that accompanied Edward's final 15 years as king began after the death of Burnell and Edward's beloved queen, Eleanor.

From the reformers, Edward also learned the value of parliaments as a means of making his wishes known to the country and learning, directly, the will and grievances of his subjects. He summoned not just his magnates, but men of many lesser stripes to these parliaments, creating thereby the defining feature of English government for the future.

The issue with Wales

The other preoccupation of Edward's first decade as king was Wales. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had done something no Welsh lord had achieved before and united Wales under his rule. Whereas in England and the rest of Europe, land was inherited through primogeniture, that is the eldest son got the lot, the Welsh followed a system of partible inheritance, which meant that every son, and sometimes nephews and cousins, expected a share in the inheritance. This had condemned the small kingdoms that made up Wales to generations of fratricidal strife. But Llywelyn, through diplomacy and martial strength, including besting a very young Edward on campaign, had brought all the country under his control and invested himself with the title Prince of Wales.

He might have kept that title if he had not sought out an advantageous marriage. But of all the eligible women he might have married, Llywelyn pursued the daughter of Simon de Montfort, yet another Eleanor. For Edward, this raised the possibility of a new civil war, and he set out to destroy Llywelyn. In this he was aided by Llywelyn's brother, Dafydd, who, true to the fratricical nature of Welsh politics, decided to side with his brother's enemies to claim what he considered his due share of his father's inheritance.

In July 1277, Edward invaded Wales. Llywelyn's stronghold was the inaccessible mountains of Snowdonia but his breadbasket was the fertile island of Anglesey, lying across the Menai Strait from Snowdonia. So to starve Llywelyn out, Edward sent a force of knights to take the island and hundreds more men armed with sickles to take the island's harvest. Surrounded, Llywelyn agreed to come to terms. Although he kept his title, Llywelyn was reduced to being king of Gwynedd. To cement English control, Edward began the construction of a series of castles, including Caernarfon, Conwy, Beaumaris and Harlech castles, a ring of stone around north Wales.

But the settlement didn't last, although the catalyst for war breaking out again was both Welsh resistance to the Anglicisation of their country, and Dafydd ap Gruffud's dissatisfaction with the land Edward had given him in return for his treachery. It was Dafydd who launched the first attacks against the English. His brother was faced with a choice of siding with his treacherous brother, or the English. Llywelyn chose his brother, and joined what became a war of national resistance against the English annexation of their country. In response, Edward led a three-pronged invasion, determined this time to bring Wales finally under his control. Llywelyn was killed

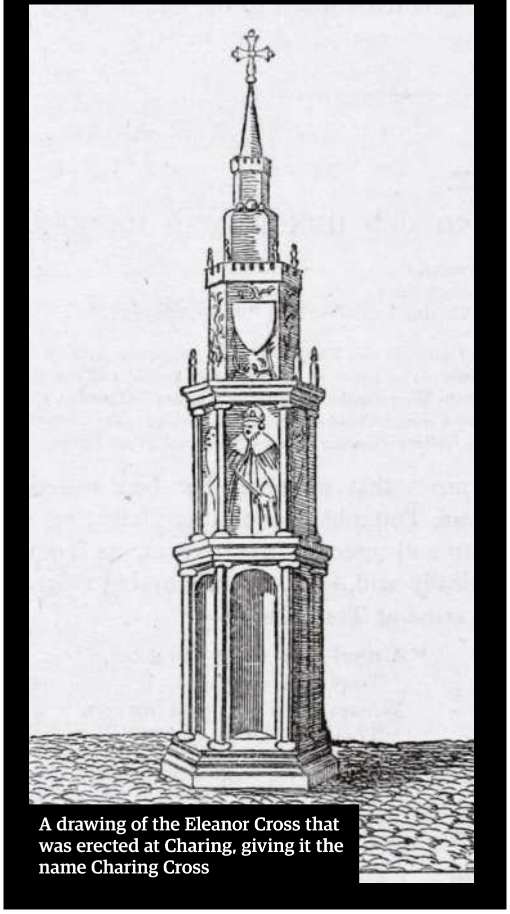
Queen Eleanor

A happy royal marriage

On 29 May 1254, Edward left England for the first time, sailing for Gascony in southern France. The journey took two weeks, so it was only a few days after arriving that Edward celebrated his 15th birthday. From Gascony, he headed south to Castile in Spain with an entourage but neither of his parents, to meet and marry his bride. Eleanor of Castile was 13, a normal age for an eligible princess to be married. What was not so usual in an arranged royal marriage was the devotion the couple showed to each other. They were seldom parted, Eleanor even accompanying Edward on Crusade, and there are no records of Edward having affairs.

For her part, Eleanor bore her husband 16 children – 11 girls and five boys, although only six survived to adulthood. The household accounts reveal that, after the abstinence of Lent, the couple had an annual custom whereby Edward would pay Eleanor's ladies a token ransom that he might go to her bedchamber on Easter Monday.

Eleanor fell ill with what was probably malaria in 1287 and her health slowly declined. Having seen her surviving children, Eleanor died on 28 November 1290 with her husband of 36 years at her side. For three days, government ceased. Then Eleanor's body was brought slowly to London, with memorial crosses being erected at each stop along the way, the Eleanor Crosses that named Waltham and Charing Cross. Edward remarried a decade later but his reign, never gentle, became markedly harsher in the years after the death of the wife "whom living we dearly cherished, and whom dead we cannot cease to love".



A drawing of the Eleanor Cross that was erected at Charing, giving it the name Charing Cross at the Battle of Orewin Bridge on 11 December 1282 and the heart was ripped from Welsh resistance. Although Edward spared those Welshmen captured during the course of the war, he made an exception in one case: the twice traitorous Dafydd ap Gruffud. Dafydd had been captured at Llanberis. As the sentence of death was slowly carried out, and the last prince of Gwynedd was slowly dragged, hanged, disembowelled and quartered, Dafydd probably regretted not having died in battle like his brother.

A Scottish revolt

Although relations with Wales had long been strained, those with Scotland were cordial. However, all this began to change when a series of early deaths left Scotland without a king, and 14 claimants to the throne. Edward claimed the right to judge among the claimants as overlord of Scotland. Amid the welter of claims to kingship that came to be called the Great Cause, Edward received sufficient backing to be called upon to judge between the two best claimants to the throne: John Balliol and Robert Bruce. In November 1292, Edward judged for John Balliol, but Balliol proved a weak king and was deposed by his magnates. In response, Edward led an invasion and, in a lightning campaign, conquered Scotland in 21 weeks, taking the Scottish coronation stone from Scone to Westminster and placing the country under English administration.

But rebellion quickly broke out led by William Wallace, who won an unexpected victory at the Battle of Stirling Bridge on 11 September 1297 over English forces commanded by the earl of Surrey. Edward, who had been in Europe, returned and defeated Wallace at the Battle of Falkirk on 22 July 1298. Wallace himself escaped, and the Scots continued to harass and resist the English through the campaigns of 1300, 1301 and 1303. However, Robert the Bruce swore fealty to Edward in 1302 and in 1305, William Wallace was captured and taken to London where he was tried and then executed in the same brutal manner as Dafydd ap Gruffud.

With Wallace dead, Edward no doubt thought Scotland finally pacified. But then Robert the Bruce killed John Comyn, the other plausible claimant to the Scottish throne, and had himself crowned king of Scotland on 25 March 1306. Furious, Edward marched north, venting his anger on the relatives of Bruce he captured: Robert's brother, Neil, was hung, drawn and quartered and his sister, Mary, put on public display in a cage hanging outside Roxburgh Castle for four years. But Robert himself avoided battle and for Edward, time was running out.

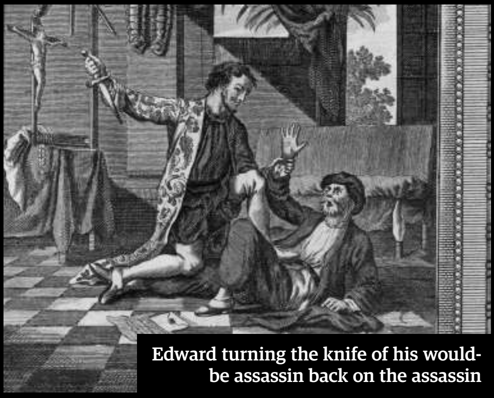
Edward was now 68 years old and in declining health, but nevertheless he insisted on accompanying his army north once more although he could make only slow progress.

On 7 July 1307, Edward died at Burgh by Sands near Carlisle. Although he was later given the title 'Hammer of the Scots', in truth the Scottish anvil wore him down and, finally, defeated him, as the Welsh could not.

Edward's Crusade

Forging a band of brothers

Edward, still a prince, set off on Crusade in the summer of 1270 with a relatively small force of around 200 knights but many more foot soldiers and servants, and his wife and her household too. He was due to join Louis IX, but when Edward reached Tunis, where Louis had diverted, he found the French king had died from dysentery. Stricken by their loss, the French returned home, but Edward pressed on, arriving in Acre on 9 May 1271. Outremer, the Crusader kingdom, was on the defensive, having lost Jerusalem for the second time in 1244. It now subsisted in heavily defended coastal enclaves. Edward led a number of raids inland, but they achieved little, and in May 1272, the titular king of Jerusalem agreed a ten-year truce with the Mamelukes. Despite the truce, in June a Muslim assassin made it into the royal quarters. Edward fought him off, then killed him, but the knife was poisoned and the wound Edward took in his arm began to turn septic. To save the king, a doctor cut away the gangrenous flesh. The story that Eleanor sucked the poison from the wound dates from later. Although the Crusade achieved little, it cemented the bonds between Edward and his household knights.



Edward turning the knife of his would-be assassin back on the assassin

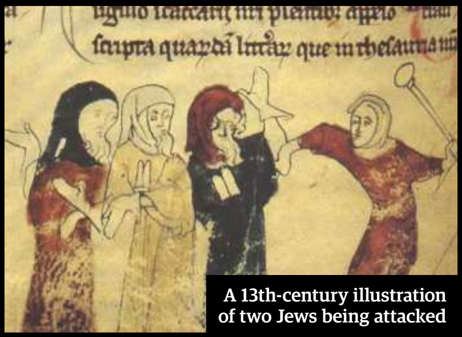
The Edict of Expulsion

Edward expelled England's entire Jewish population in 1290

There were no Jews in Britain before 1066, but William invited them to England after the Conquest. Christians were not permitted to lend money at interest but Jews could, allowing them to quickly become a key financial resource for king and nobility.

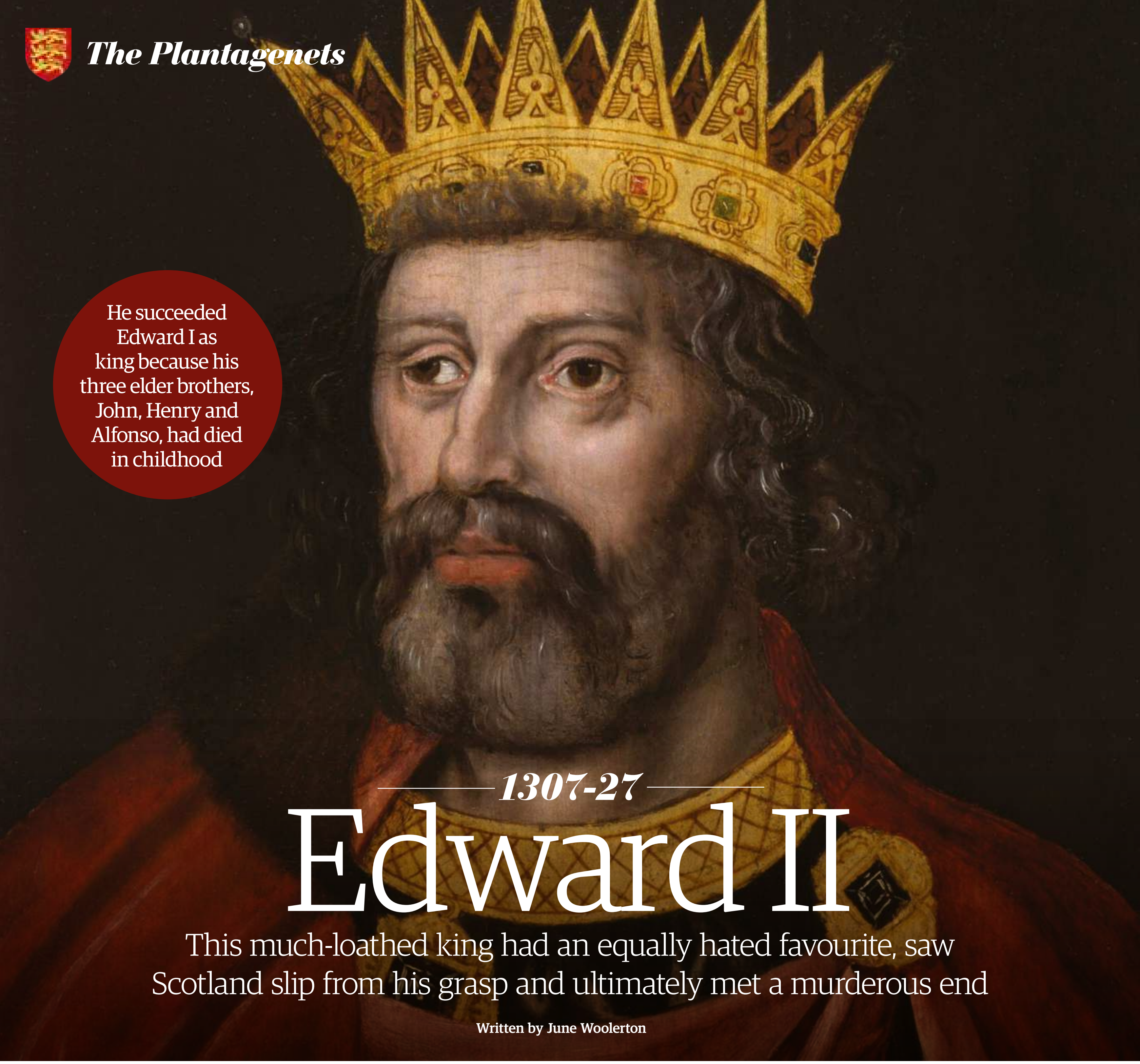
As they were invited to England by the king, Jews were under the protection of the crown, which worked fine so long as the monarch protected them. However, as successive sovereigns pressured the Jewish population to produce more money, they were forced to sell on debts, which the English nobility that bought the debt then used to foreclose the land used as security, allowing larger landowners to appropriate the holdings of knights and merchants. In 1275, Edward ordered that Jews could no longer practise money lending.

In 1290, needing more money, Edward summoned Parliament to ask for the imposition of a general tax. Parliament agreed to the tax – £116,000, the biggest tax of the medieval period – in return for an edict expelling the Jews. The country's remaining Jews, about 2,000 people were expelled. They were not allowed back for over 350 years.



A 13th-century illustration of two Jews being attacked

© Getty; WIKI



He succeeded Edward I as king because his three elder brothers, John, Henry and Alfonso, had died in childhood

1307-27

Edward II

This much-loathed king had an equally hated favourite, saw Scotland slip from his grasp and ultimately met a murderous end

Written by June Woolerton

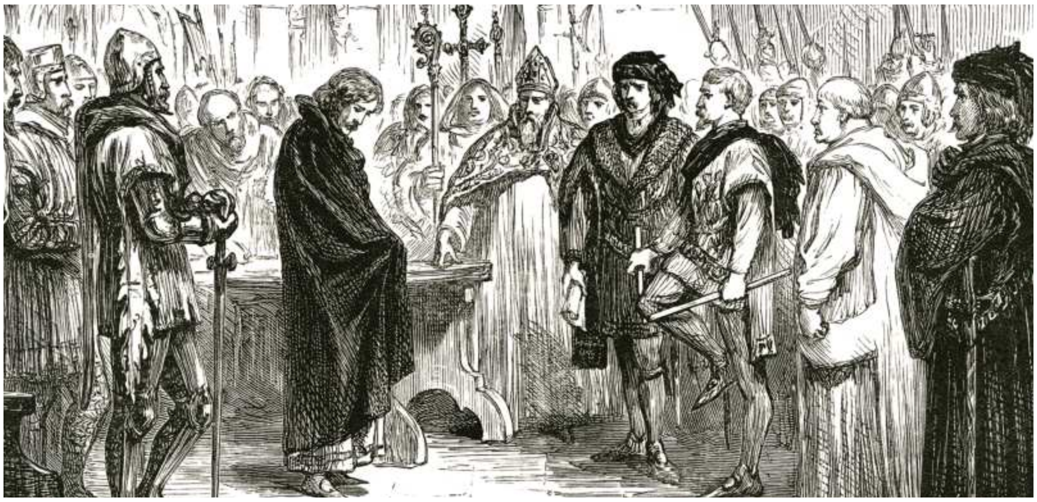
Edward I had proven himself to be a very effective king, suppressing numerous rebellions and waging a good many bloody wars. He had become one of Scotland's greatest adversaries and he had annexed Wales in a bid to bring stability and control to his realm. But when he died in July 1307 and his son, Edward of Caernarfon, became king at the age of 23, there was a real danger that much of that hard work would be undone.

For while Edward II had accompanied his father on his campaigns and had been bestowed the title of the first Prince of Wales in 1301, he was a more cultured man who did not share the same appetite nor aptitude for battle. His father had noted this and hoped, in assigning Piers Gaveston to the young Prince Edward's household, some of the English nobleman's martial skills would rub off. They didn't. Instead, Edward II became very attached to Gaveston who, as a consequence, was exiled to France for being a bad influence.

So when Edward II became king – his three elder brothers having died in childhood – he was left in a difficult position. The war with Scotland was still raging, debts were running high and relations with France were nothing short of hostile. Yet rather than gather together the best possible people to help him sort these issues out, one of his first moves as king was to recall Gaveston and give him the earldom of Cornwall. Since this was a title that had always been given to royalty, it caused an uproar. Gaveston had become Edward II's favourite and the barons did not like it one bit.

In a bid to resolve long-running tensions between the French and English crowns which had been a legacy of his father, Edward II married Isabella of France, the daughter of the French king Philip IV, in 1308. It led to Gaveston being banished to France for a second time on the insistence of both the barons and the French royals in an attempt to put distance between the two men. The exile didn't last long and Gaveston was brought back in 1309.

With tensions continuing to run high and opposition to the king barely diminishing, the nobles issued the Ordinances of 1311 in a bid to restrict the king's power over finances and appointments. They also ordered Gaveston be banished for a third time. Edward II agreed – but it was a bluff. Gaveston was brought back again, with the king not only insisting



that it had been unlawful to banish him, but restoring his own power. This angered the barons, who began to gather their armies.

In 1312, Gaveston was besieged in Scarborough Castle. After surrendering, he was taken to Deddington in Oxfordshire but he was then seized by the earl of Warwick, Guy de Beauchamp. Paraded through the streets of Warwick and imprisoned in the castle, Edward II's favourite was tried, taken to Blacklow Hill outside of the town and beheaded. The king vowed revenge.

Two years later, Edward II sought to resolve the ongoing war with Scotland. Edward Bruce, the brother of Robert the Bruce who had seized the Scottish throne in 1306, had besieged Stirling Castle and this forced England's hand. Around 2,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry were assembled against the Scots, but the resulting Battle of Bannockburn in June 1314 proved too much. Over two days, Robert the Bruce's men put up a fierce fight and pushed the English back. Humiliated, Edward II was unable to prevent subsequent Scottish raids in the north of England, nor the invasion of Ireland.

It was a terrible time for the king. A shortage of food created by terrible weather caused support for him to fall further. Edward's cousin, Thomas of Lancaster, was heading up the barons and power was shifting. An attempt to put aside their differences in 1318 was marred by Edward II's new favourites, Hugh le Despenser and his son. And then, in 1320, the Scots signed the Declaration of Arbroath and asserted their independence. Although Edward II did not recognise it, he signed a 13-year truce with Robert the Bruce who, by this point was seriously ill.

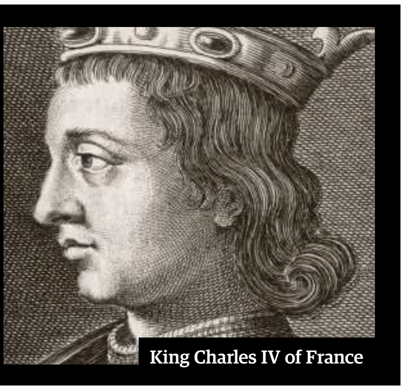
Not that it solved any of the king's problems. Civil war had broken out in 1321, triggered by tensions between the Despenser family and the barons. Lancaster led a group of the Despensers' enemies into battle, seizing land. He was joined by Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, who led the Marcher lords in a revolt. Edward II's men fought back and Lancaster was defeated at Boroughbridge in 1322. Lancaster was executed but Mortimer escaped from the Tower of London and fled to France.

At the same time, tensions with France began flaring again and in 1325, Isabella was sent across the sea to help resolve them. Instead, she refused to return and allied herself with Mortimer, who also became her lover. Together, they led an army to capture Edward II, forcing him to become the first English royal to abdicate, in his case in favour of his 14-year-old son, Edward III. Imprisoned and tortured in the most grotesque of manners, he was murdered in Berkeley Castle in 1327.

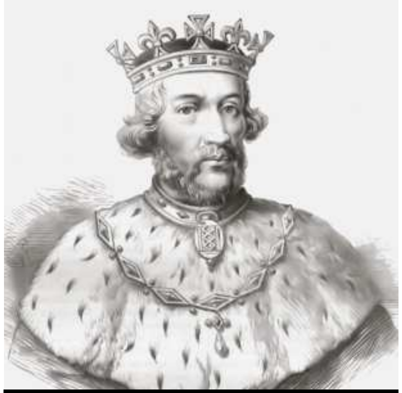
> His 19-year reign came to an end when he was betrayed by his own wife, forced to abdicate and murdered

War of Saint-Sardos

A conflict between the kingdoms of England and France ran from October 1323 to September 1335 and it proved to be a bitter blow for Edward II's reputation. Edward was the duke of Aquitaine in France, but a dispute in the ancient region with King Charles IV of France flared. The French were interfering in the governing of Aquitaine and had agreed to build a royal bastide in Saint-Sardos. When a French sergeant looked to seize the site, he was hanged by a local landowner. The French believed Edward II had ordered the killing, something he denied, but the diplomatic gloves were off. Charles IV would go on to conquer the duchy of Guyenne in a battle that lasted six weeks. It was a precursor to the Hundred Years' War.



King Charles IV of France



Edward II, as depicted in Cassell's *History of England*, published around 1902

Life in the time of Edward II

Medicine was positively Medieval

Becoming severely ill during the time when Edward II reigned was almost a direct route to the grave. Only the wealthy had access to trained doctors and even they would tend to diagnose on the basis of examining blood, stools and urine. Poor people had to rely on passed-down traditional 'cures', accompanied by a pleading prayer.

People were more cultured in those days

Although Edward II enjoyed the company of the lower classes, he loved music, sailing, dancing and plays, and the time in which he lived was certainly cultured. In 1308, Italian poet Dante began to write his epic *The Divine Comedy*, which has come to be seen as one of the greatest works of literature.

Food was rather scarce

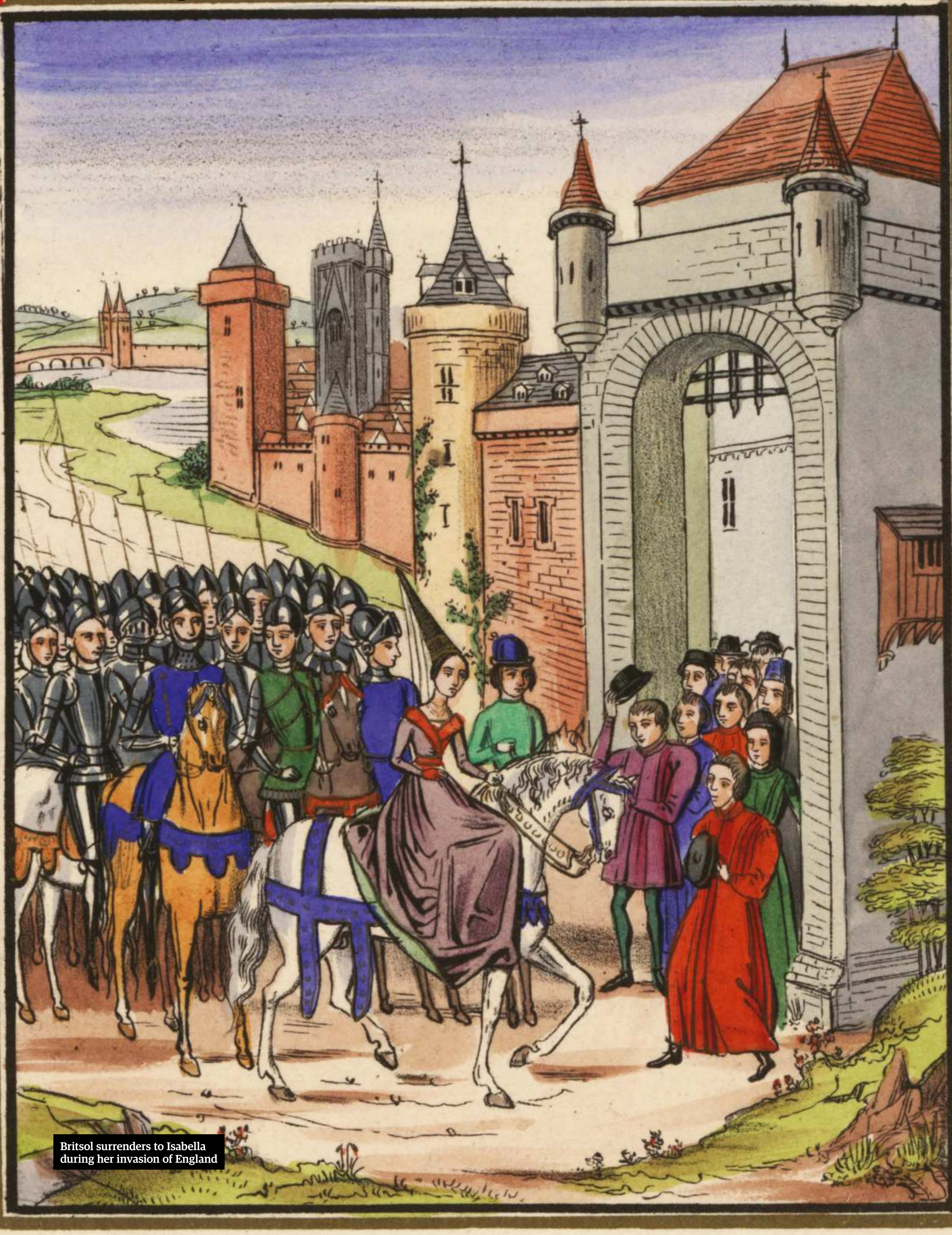
Poor harvests took their toll throughout the early part of Edward II's reign, leading the masses towards hunger, but things got worse when crop failures between 1315 and 1322 led to famine. Peasants even feasted on seeds that were intended for planting in the spring and tens of thousands of starved to death.

Death was an obsession for many

One of the most popular stories of the day was a tale that most likely came from France. It told of three corpses meeting three living princes, warning that life would soon come to an end for them. Death was a regular plot driver in stories of the early 1300s.

Inflation reached its greatest ever rate

The pound sterling was established as England's main currency, but there was trouble ahead. Inflation rocketed to a staggering 100.4 per cent in 1316. With half of the pound's value lopped off, great hardship was caused among an already embattled population. 20 shillings made up a pound, with 12 pence equalling one shilling.



Britsol surrenders to Isabella during her invasion of England

The Royal Lovers' Conquest

Isabella, Queen of England, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, risked everything to carry out one of the most daring invasions in English royal history

Written by June Woolerton

On a quiet September day in 1326, a fleet of boats sailed into the River Orwell in Suffolk. Hundreds of men began to disembark, bringing with them horses, provisions and weapons. At their head was none other than the queen of England, Isabella of France, and by her side was the man acknowledged to be her lover. He was Roger Mortimer, who had fled England years earlier in a daring escape to save his life. Together, they came in anger, intent on dismantling the country's government.

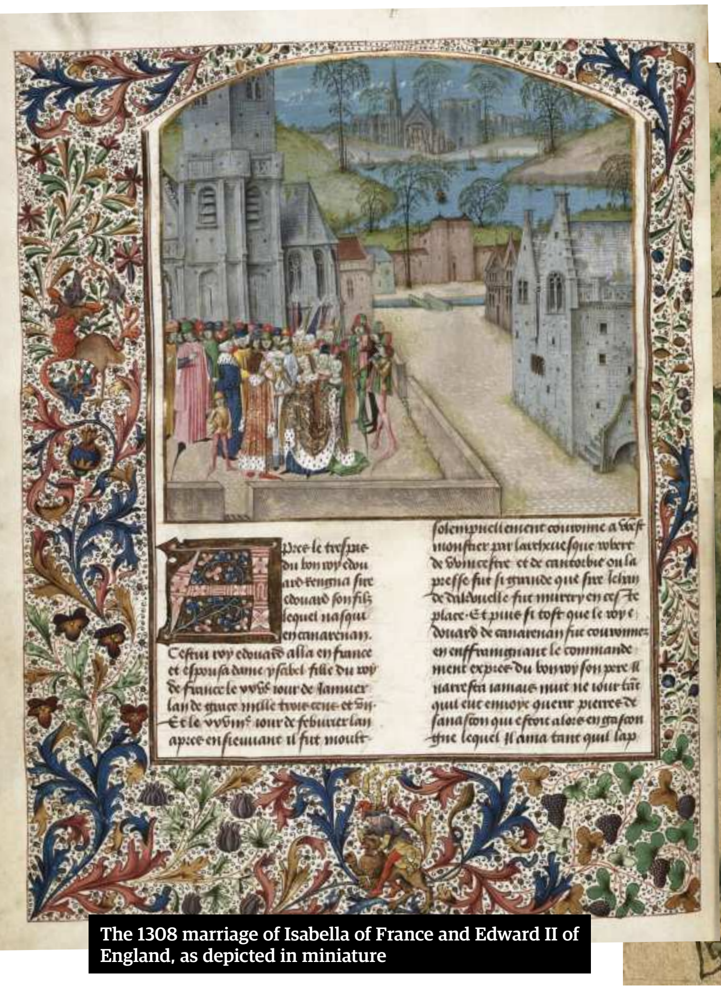
Success seemed unlikely. The invading army was small and not even completely sure of where it had actually landed. England's king had the potential to raise a formidable force to oppose it and a huge treasury at his disposal. Roger Mortimer had a price on his head, having been in exile for three years after an earlier revolt against Edward II, while Isabella had committed treason by beginning a relationship with him. An unsteady invasion headed by a traitor queen and an unforgiven rebel sounded like a recipe for disaster. Yet, only weeks later, Isabella and Roger had conquered the country and were on the point of deposing Edward II and taking real power themselves with an ever-growing wave of popular support behind them. One of the reasons this unlikely royal invasion succeeded was their choice of enemy.

When Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer invaded England on 24 September 1326, they had in their sights the Despensers. The family had risen to prominence in the previous eight years, mostly because of Edward II's devotion to Hugh Despenser the Younger. Edward had a habit of taking favourites, with some rumoured to be his lovers, but Hugh Despenser had more power than any before him. Along with his father, Hugh Despenser the Elder, he quickly accumulated land and money as well as exerting influence over the king's policy and government. The Despensers had become so unpopular that by 1321 they were exiled, and war broke out between the king and the barons who were opposed to his favourites.

King Edward was ultimately victorious, winning the decisive Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322, and the Despensers were restored to the heart of his court. With their connivance, the king inflicted harsh punishments on those who had opposed them, and Edward and his favourites were left unchecked. By the time Isabella arrived with her army, the Despensers were the most hated people in England. As her invading force of just 1,500 men unloaded their weapons and provisions, Isabella sat in a makeshift camp, writing letters to the citizens of London to explain that she had come to free the country from the Despensers. There was no threat to the king, her husband, in the letters – only promises to save her country. It was enough to start turning people to her side.

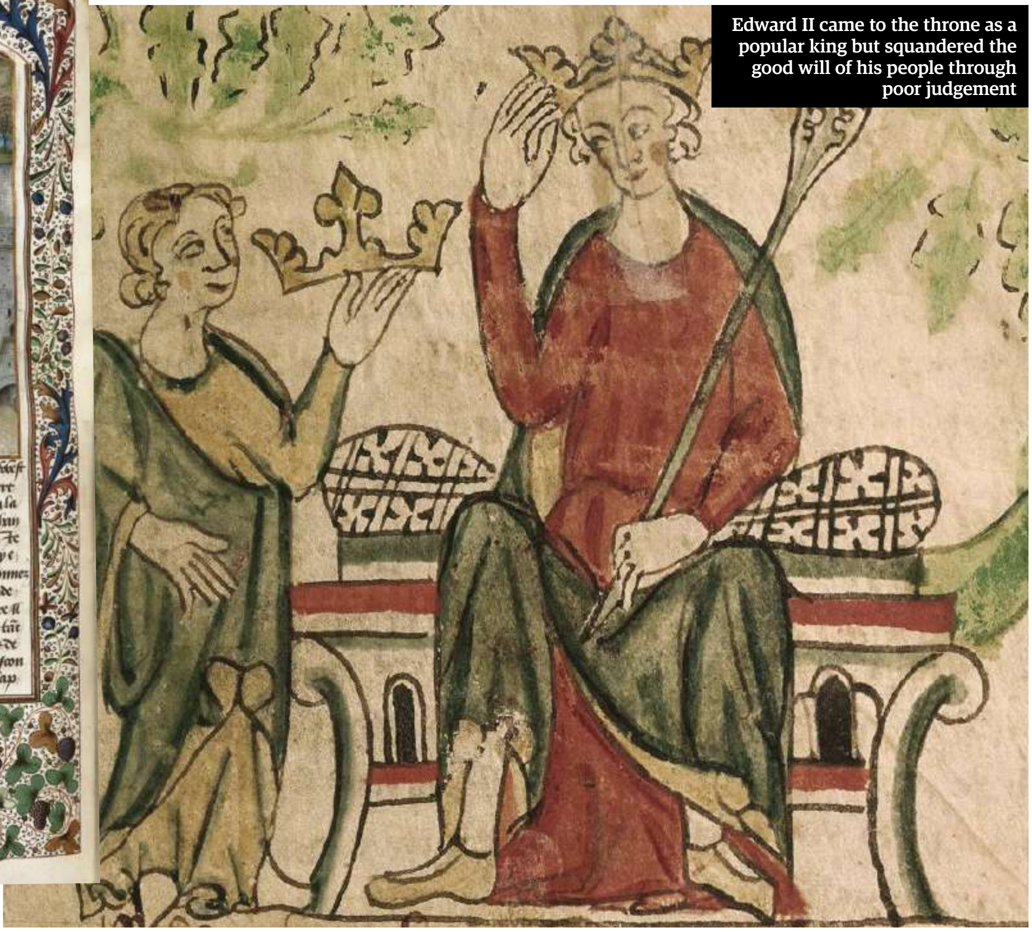
But while Isabella played the part of the desperate queen, risking all to rescue her people from tyranny, she also had very personal reasons for wanting to see the Despensers vanquished. Though she was known to history as "the She-Devil of France", Isabella was actually an unlikely rebel. For most of her marriage she was a loyal consort to her king despite his fickle behaviour. Born a princess of France in 1295 and feted from early on for her beauty, she had married Edward II in 1308 and endured years of humiliation as her husband promoted his then-favourite, Piers Gaveston, ahead of her.

Isabella saw lands and jewels meant for her given to Gaveston, but she compromised and learned to live alongside Edward and his favourite. She comforted her husband when Gaveston was



Apres le trespas
du bon roy edou
ard regna sire
edouard son filz
lequel nasquit
en carnarvan.
Cestui roy edouard alla en france
et espousa dame ysabel fille du roy
de france le xxv^e iour de ianvier
lan de grace mille trois cens et viij.
Et le xxviij^e iour de febvrier lan
apres ensuivant il fut moult
solempnellement couronne a west
monstier par larcevesque robert
de wincestre et de cantorbie ou la
presse fut si grande que sire iehan
de baldewelle fut murtry en celle
place. Et puis si tost que le roy e
douard de carnarvan fut couronnez
en enfraingnant le commande
ment expres du bon roy son pere il
narresta iamais nuit ne iour tant
quil eut envoye querir pierres de
gavaston qui estoit alors en gascon
gne lequel il ama tant quil lap

The 1308 marriage of Isabella of France and Edward II of England, as depicted in miniature



Edward II came to the throne as a popular king but squandered the good will of his people through poor judgement

ultimately executed by unhappy barons. She had stood by her husband as the Despensers rose to power, and when opposition to them first threatened to spill into war, she gave him a face-saving reason to exile them by pleading on her knees for the family to be sent away. She would help engineer an opportunity for Edward to turn on his enemies just months later, but once the Despenser War was won in 1322, she found herself sidelined again.

Just months after Boroughbridge, Edward suffered a humiliating defeat in his Scottish campaign and fled south with Despenser. Isabella was abandoned in Northumberland and only narrowly escaped. Two of her ladies-in-waiting died and the queen's loyalty to Edward wavered. In the coming months, she spent little time with him and refused to swear loyalty to the Despensers. When Edward found himself at odds with Isabella's brother, King Charles IV of France, in 1324, the Despensers moved against her, taking her lands, her household and her four children from her.

Isabella joined a growing band of high-born figures vanquished by the Despensers and in fear of their safety as the king's favourites did as they pleased. The origins of her alliance with Roger Mortimer remain mysterious but like Isabella, he had also been a loyal servant of Edward II who had turned into an enemy because of the Despensers. Roger, Baron Mortimer, was the son and grandson of men who had supported Edward's father and grandfather in their Welsh campaigns. He had held land in the Welsh Marches, on the border with England and had made a wealthy marriage to Joan de Geneville.

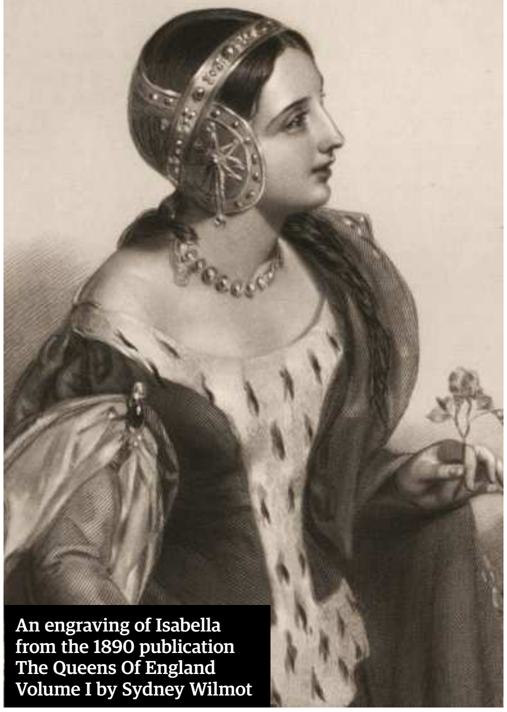
Mortimer was made lord lieutenant of Ireland in 1316 but as the Despensers accumulated land in Wales, he became increasingly unhappy and in 1322 he was on the losing side at Boroughbridge. The death sentence that followed his capture was commuted to life in prison. He was taken to the Tower of London from where he escaped on 1 August 1323. It is possible that he and Isabella were already in contact – the queen of England had been at the Tower in February 1323 while Roger was captive there and soon afterwards she wrote a letter in support of his wife. Whether Isabella and Mortimer were forming a political or personal partnership at this time remains a mystery. They would next meet again in France, where he fled after his famous escape from the Tower. It was here that they became lovers and plotted their invasion.

Queen Isabella's voyage to France was ostensibly to help her husband. Edward, as well as being king of England, was also duke of Aquitaine, meaning he owed homage for his French lands to Isabella's brother, Charles IV. Edward didn't want to bend his knee to anyone but he was also afraid that if he left England, his enemies would turn on the Despensers. The royal favourites weren't welcome in France and so Edward stayed put.

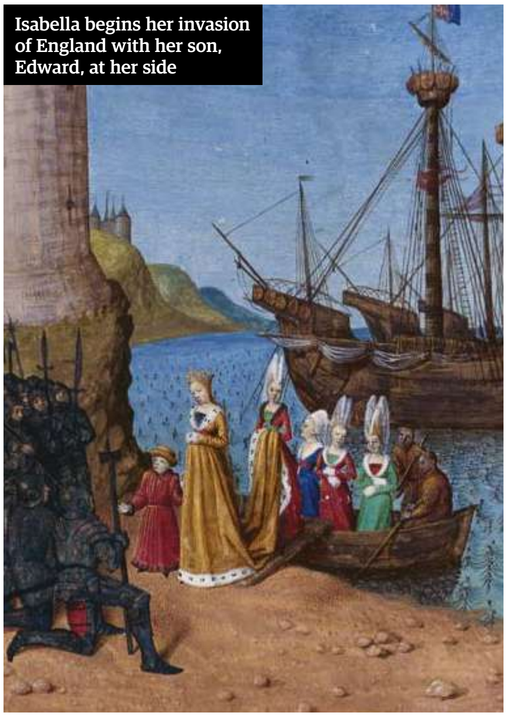
In 1325, Charles confiscated his lands and Pope John XXII suggested Isabella travel to France to negotiate with her brother to try and resolve the situation. She left England meek and mild, promising to bring a resolution to her husband's woes, but as soon as she arrived in Paris, Isabella changed. She negotiated a settlement whereby her eldest son, Prince Edward, would do homage for the lands on his father's behalf, but she refused to go home and held out until the 13-year-old was sent to her. Her son did his homage in Paris in September 1325, meaning Isabella had no reason to stay in France.

Edward sent the bishop of Exeter to bring her home but she refused to meet him. When he tried to publicly shame her into returning by declaring

> "Edward wrote to sheriffs... warning them to be ready to take arms against Isabella, who he said was being influenced by Mortimer"



An engraving of Isabella from the 1890 publication The Queens Of England Volume I by Sydney Wilmot



Isabella begins her invasion of England with her son, Edward, at her side

in front of Charles IV's court that she had to go back to Edward, the meek Isabella disappeared for good. In front of a shocked audience she told him that she would not go. Her brother backed her up, telling the bishop, "The queen came of her own free will and may freely return if she so wishes. But if she prefers to remain… I refuse to expel her." Isabella began dressing as a widow to show that she considered her husband lost to her – because of Despenser.

Within months, Edward was letting everyone know he believed his marriage was in jeopardy because of Mortimer, who had arrived in Paris as 1325 drew to an end. The attraction between Isabella and Roger was obvious and their affair became notorious. There are few references to it in the chronicles of the time but in June 1326, Edward II wrote to Charles IV, describing Isabella's behaviour as "improper", adding that she "consorts with our… mortal enemy, Mortimer" and sent a copy to the pope for good measure. Around the same time, an argument was recorded between Mortimer and Isabella in which he threatened to kill her after she suggested she should return to Edward. That this dispute took place in the presence of Isabella's son shows the depth of emotional attachment between the two. Their relationship was no secret and neither were their plans to invade England.

Edward II was so sure of their threat that in January 1326 he gave orders for watches along the south coast of England to seek out letters from plotters. In February, Edward wrote to sheriffs around England warning them to be ready to take arms against Isabella, who he said was being influenced by Mortimer. Meanwhile, the queen and the baron were corresponding with those who opposed the Despensers in England while trying to build up alliances on the continent. In another letter to his son, Edward II told him not to marry without his permission, aware that the heir to the English throne was a useful bargaining tool in Isabella's quest to win backing for her planned attack.

Edward seemed to gain the upper hand when the pope ordered Charles IV to cease his support for Isabella and her lover in July 1326 and the chronicler Froissart records that not long afterwards, the French king summoned his sister and told her to abandon her plans to invade. Isabella went to her own lands in Ponthieu to raise support.

As August approached, Isabella followed Roger Mortimer to Hainault where she did several deals with its count, William, for support for her invasion plans. One of these involved marrying her son to one of his daughters and the deal was signed on 27 August. The bride's dowry included money and ships and within a month, Isabella and Roger led their army of supporters and mercenaries, as well as the teenage heir to the English throne, onto the boats at Dordrecht and set sail across the Channel for England on 22 September.

Edward's spies knew where they were planning to land and the king had ordered a fleet of ships to the Orwell, but the fleet never appeared. When the invaders landed, they were swift and ruthless in their operation. Isabella was a mastermind at winning public support and the day after arriving in Orwell she headed, dressed in her widow's clothes, towards the shrine at Bury St Edmunds, reassuring the local population along the way that her troops would not pillage and paying for any damage already done. By the time she reached Cambridge, a number of bishops joined her to express their support and hand over much-needed funds.

Mortimer's daring escape

How Roger Mortimer escaped certain death with a daring flight from the Tower

Though known for his love affair with Isabella and the invasion of England, Roger Mortimer had already secured a place in royal history prior to those events. On 1 August 1323, he became one of the few people known to have escaped the infamous prison that was the Tower of London.

Mortimer had entered the Tower in 1322 after ending up on the losing side at the Battle of Boroughbridge. He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death but Edward, in a move he would later regret, commuted that to life imprisonment. Mortimer wasn't going to let prison stop his work against the Despensers and he corresponded with allies in letters smuggled out of the Tower. Edward intercepted them and, realising the danger Mortimer posed, began to consider having him killed.

Mortimer knew then that he had to flee and on 1 August 1323, he employed a trick that had worked for another famous escapee, Bishop Ranulf Flambard, by using wine to knock his guards out. While Flambard had got them drunk, Mortimer managed to get some kind of sedative into the wine that was served to them on the feast of Saint Peter ad Vincula.

Once they were all unconscious, the sub-lieutenant of the Tower – who had mysteriously declined wine all evening – helped make a hole in Mortimer's cell and along with another prisoner, Mortimer finally escaped through the kitchens, climbing a chimney to get to the roof. The use of rope ladders helped them negotiate the Tower's walls and roofs and soon after, they found themselves in a boat being rowed to Greenwich.

Mortimer was now the most wanted man in the country but while armed guards searched for him, he headed to Windsor Castle to try and free others locked up after Boroughbridge. After that, he headed to the south coast and the Isle of Wight, and from there he made it to relative safety in France. His daring escape became the stuff of legend and only made Edward and the Despensers hate him more.

Isabella's first brush with adultery

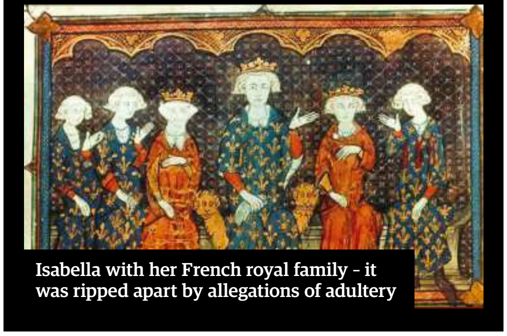
The queen of England knew firsthand the punishments given to unfaithful royal wives

If anyone understood the dangers facing royal women accused of adultery, it was Isabella of France. As a young queen, she had seen her sisters-in-law thrown into jail over claims that they had been acting unfaithfully to her brothers. The consequences for her royal house were disastrous.

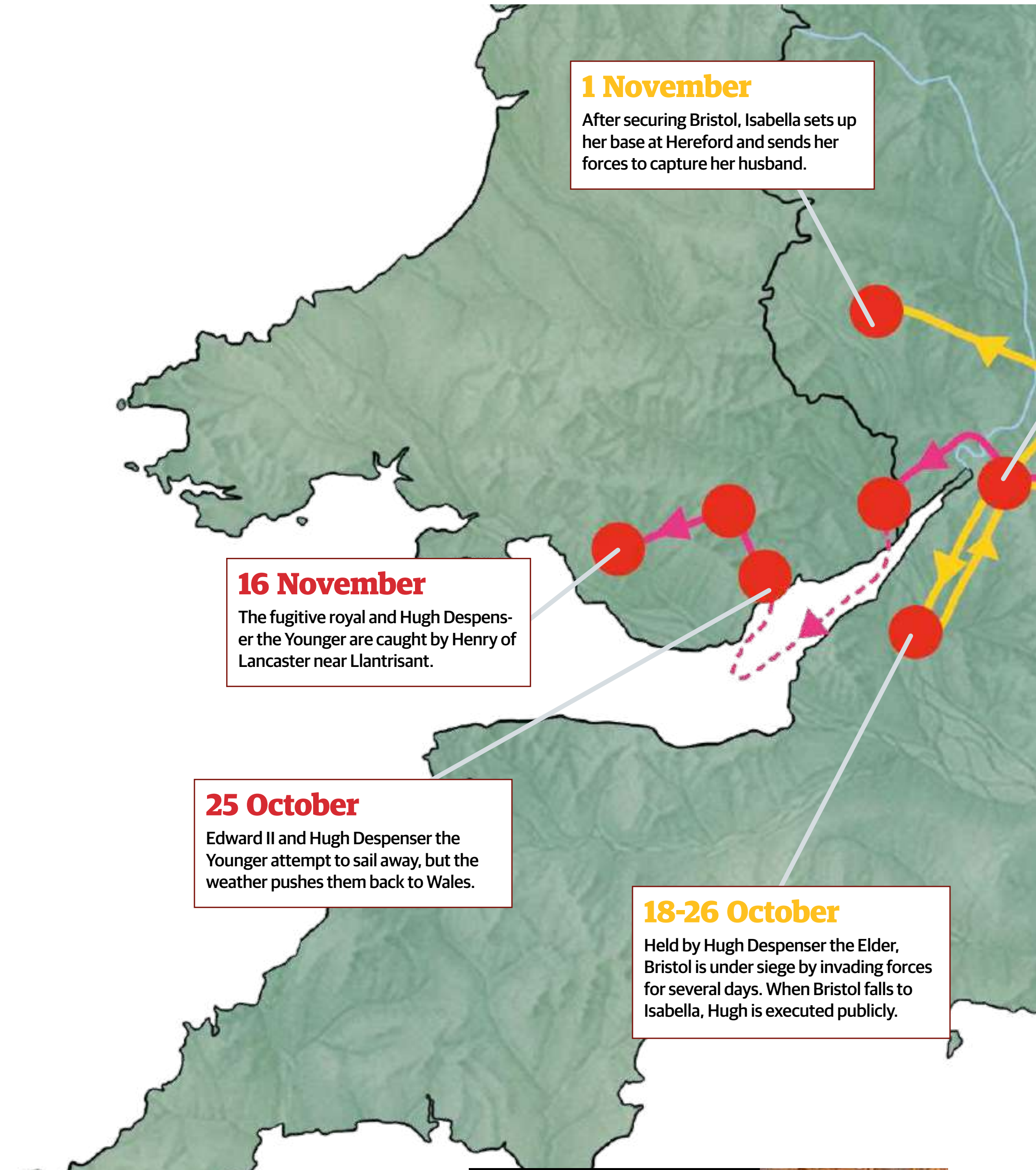
In 1313, Isabella and Edward had visited her father, Philip IV, in Paris. During the celebrations, Isabella gave purses to her brothers, Charles, Louis and Philip, and their wives. Later the same year, she saw the same bags being carried by two Norman knights in London. In 1314, visiting her father alone, Isabella told him she thought her sisters-in-law might be having affairs with the knights. Philip had them all watched and accused the men, Gautier and Philippe d'Aunay, of adultery with his daughters-in-law. The two men were found guilty as were Charles' wife, Margaret, and Philip's spouse, Blanche. Louis' wife, Joan, was declared innocent. The knights were executed, and Margaret and Blanche found themselves imprisoned.

Within months, Philip IV was dead. Louis became king, carrying on the House of Capet, but he had no consort until Margaret conveniently died in 1315, allowing Louis to remarry. He died in June 1316 and his son, John, born that November, only lived for five days. Louis had had a daughter, Joan, with Margaret but his brother, Philip, now contested her legitimacy given her mother's adultery. He became king but died in 1322, leaving only daughters. His brother, Charles, took the crown as the tradition of male-only succession had taken root when Philip claimed the crown above a woman. Charles remarried twice after the imprisonment of his first wife, but on his death in 1328 he left no heir and the French crown passed to the House of Valois.

Isabella had not only seen her sisters-in-law suffer as a result of their adultery, but the affairs had led to her royal house losing the crown. There would be more serious consequences, too. Ultimately, the Valois claim to the French crown was challenged by Isabella's son, Edward III, which then led to the Hundred Years' War.



Isabella with her French royal family – it was ripped apart by allegations of adultery



1 November

After securing Bristol, Isabella sets up her base at Hereford and sends her forces to capture her husband.

16 November

The fugitive royal and Hugh Despenser the Younger are caught by Henry of Lancaster near Llantrisant.

25 October

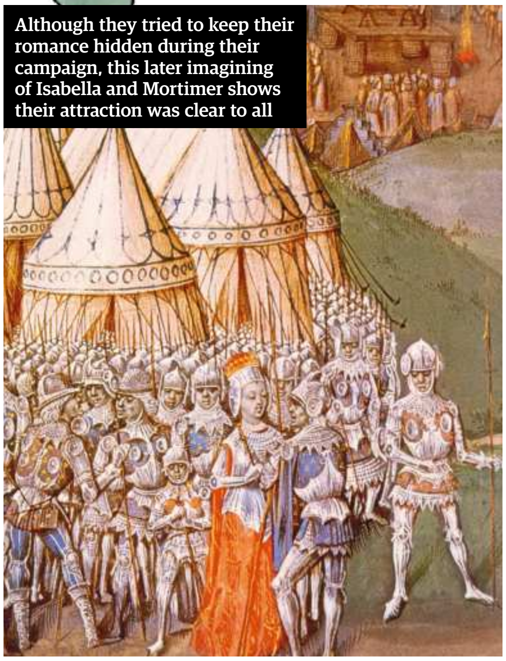
Edward II and Hugh Despenser the Younger attempt to sail away, but the weather pushes them back to Wales.

18-26 October

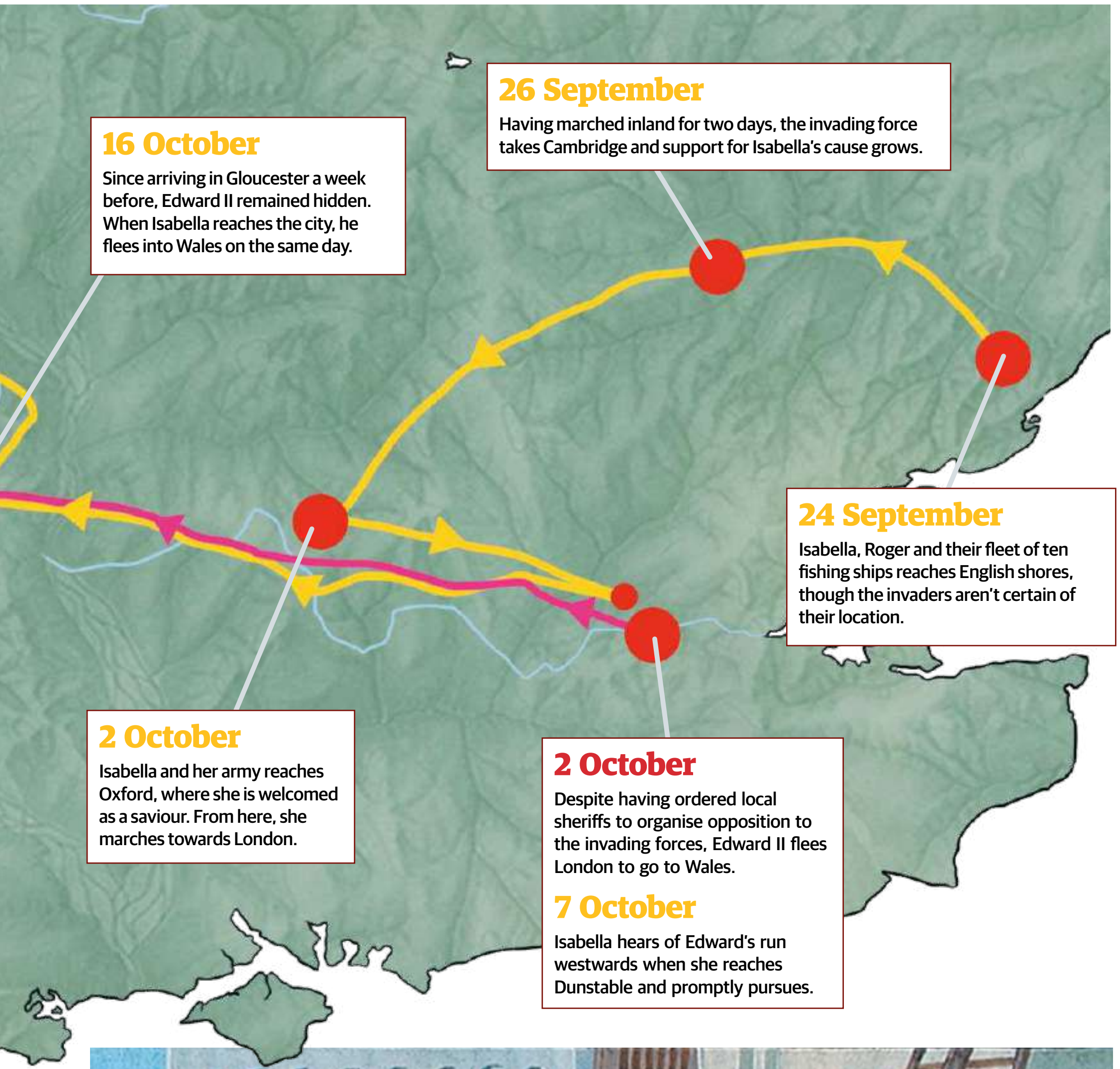
Held by Hugh Despenser the Elder, Bristol is under siege by invading forces for several days. When Bristol falls to Isabella, Hugh is executed publicly.

Edward II, meanwhile, tried to raise troops and asked the people of London to help – he was all but ignored. He gave pardons to murderers if they would fight for him and offered a reward of £1,000 for Mortimer's head. The invaders headed to Oxford and Edward II ordered the city to bar its gates to Isabella and Mortimer – instead, they were welcomed warmly. Isabella was presented with a silver cup and one of her friendly bishops, Adam Orleton, preached a sermon at Saint Mary's in the city in her support.

Edward began to flee west while Isabella and Mortimer circled in on London, appealing to its citizens for help. The city turned for the queen in



Although they tried to keep their romance hidden during their campaign, this later imagining of Isabella and Mortimer shows their attraction was clear to all



26 September

Having marched inland for two days, the invading force takes Cambridge and support for Isabella's cause grows.

16 October

Since arriving in Gloucester a week before, Edward II remained hidden. When Isabella reaches the city, he flees into Wales on the same day.

24 September

Isabella, Roger and their fleet of ten fishing ships reaches English shores, though the invaders aren't certain of their location.

2 October

Isabella and her army reaches Oxford, where she is welcomed as a saviour. From here, she marches towards London.

2 October

Despite having ordered local sheriffs to organise opposition to the invading forces, Edward II flees London to go to Wales.

7 October

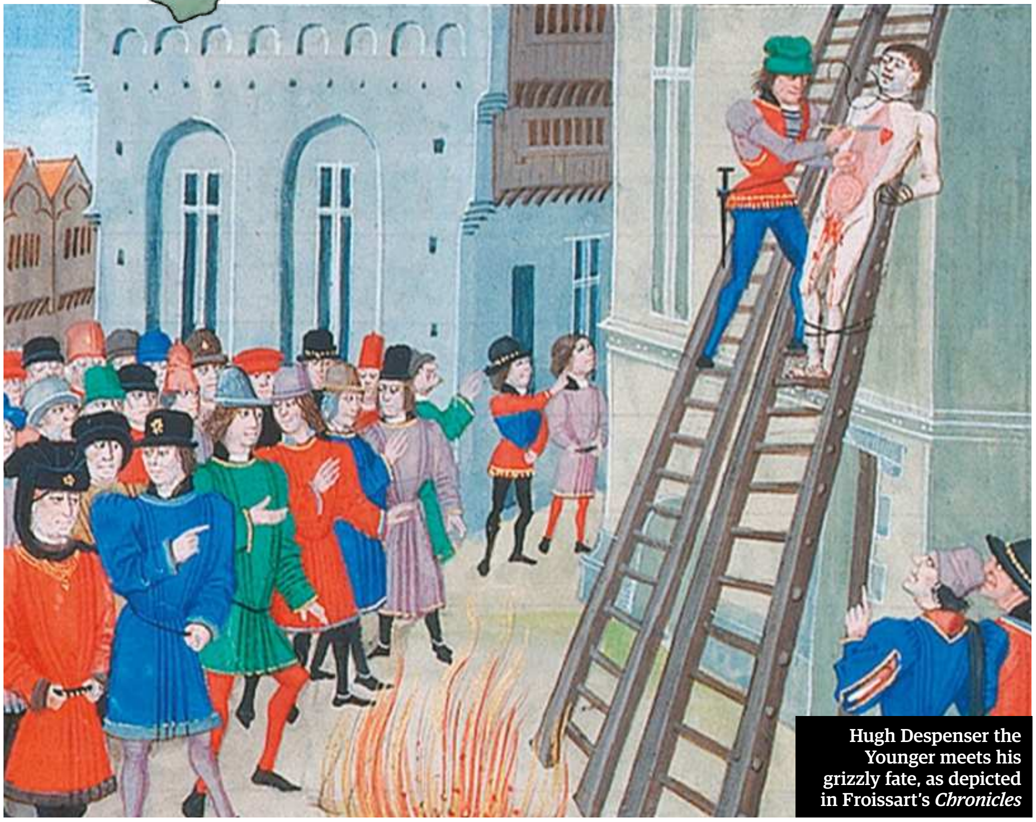
Isabella hears of Edward's run westwards when she reaches Dunstable and promptly pursues.

the middle of October, taking the Tower and killing one of Despenser's men. Walter de Stapledon was in London at the time and rode for sanctuary in Saint Paul's, but he was intercepted and killed, with his head sent to Isabella as a trophy. It reached her in Gloucester after she and Mortimer decided to follow Edward towards Wales.

Soon after, they claimed their first Despenser after laying siege to Bristol, which was under the command of Hugh Despenser the Elder. When the city fell, he was tried and executed while his son and Edward II rode hopelessly through Wales trying to find supporters. As he realised his cause was lost, Edward appealed in vain to Isabella to negotiate a settlement. By the time he was captured near Llantrisant in Wales on 16 November, he had few men to support him, and his wife and her lover were already issuing orders to bring the country back to normality. Edward was sent to Monmouth Castle while Hugh Despenser the Younger was brought before Isabella in Hereford, where he was ultimately condemned on 24 November, dying a grisly death immediately afterwards.

On 26 November, the Great Seal was delivered to Queen Isabella - she and Mortimer were now effectively in charge of England just two months after their invasion had begun. Edward II remained in custody while a council debated his fate and in January, its decision to depose him was agreed by parliament. Isabella's son became Edward III, crowned on 1 February 1327 with his mother and her lover in Westminster Abbey to watch. The teenage king might be sitting on the throne, but they controlled it. By the time that news of Edward II's death reached the court on 23 September 1327, Isabella and Mortimer were fully in control and doing little to hide their relationship.

The invasion that began in such inauspicious circumstances had led them to power with little bloodshed. The lovers had freed England from some of its most hated figures but within three years they were thrown out of power without protest. Mortimer was executed in 1330 while Isabella emerged from house arrest to play a part in royal life once more during her son's reign. Isabella and Roger's political lives were action packed, brief and turbulent, which made them notorious and led to the royal lovers' conquest of England.



Hugh Despenser the Younger meets his grizzly fate, as depicted in Froissart's *Chronicles*

"Edward II ordered the city to bar its gates to Isabella and Mortimer - instead, they were welcomed warmly"

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1312-77

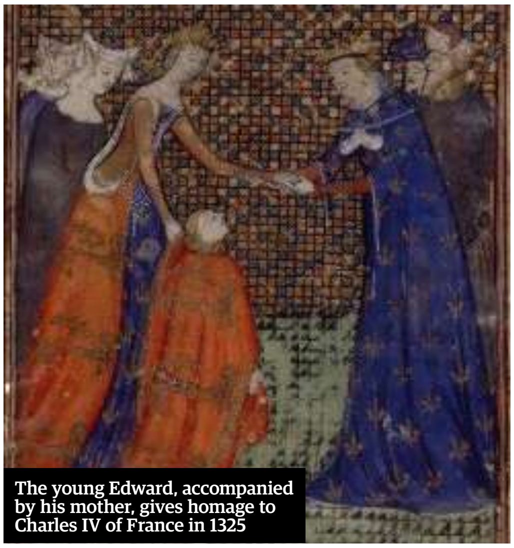
Edward III

In the decade before the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War, Edward III was transformed from a pawn in royal politics into an assertive and capable ruler

Written by Jon Wright

The first three years of Edward III's reign were a time of frustration and humiliation for the young king. Following his accession to the throne in January 1327, authority was theoretically vested in a regency council headed by Henry, Earl of Lancaster, but Edward's mother, Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, rode roughshod over these sensible arrangements. Having launched an invasion and secured the deposition of Edward's father, Edward II, the couple had no intention of relinquishing an ounce of influence. Mortimer set about enriching himself, and he audaciously named himself earl of March, and sought to control every aspect of government.

His policies, not least his disastrous military campaigns against Scotland, proved wildly unpopular and, at a personal level, his treatment of Edward provoked deep resentments. The coronation of Edward's wife, Philippa of Hainault, was repeatedly delayed, Mortimer routinely chastised Edward in public, and took to walking ahead of the king on formal occasions. Edward would endure the murder of his father in September 1327 and the execution of his uncle, Edmund, Earl of Kent, in early 1330. Rumours even began to circulate that Mortimer might go so far as usurping the throne.

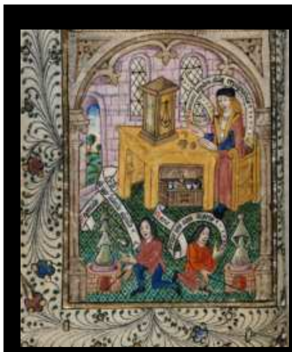

The young Edward, accompanied by his mother, gives homage to Charles IV of France in 1325

By 1330, Edward's allies were urging the embattled monarch to strike. As William Montagu famously told the king, "It is better to eat the dog than to be eaten by the dog." So it was that, in October of that year, Edward's supporters arrested Mortimer at Nottingham Castle and relished his subsequent execution at Tyburn in November. Edward had no desire to take such action against his mother but she was banished from the corridors of power, spending much of the remainder of her life at Castle Rising in Norfolk. A formal proclamation, issued within hours of Mortimer's fall, announced that "the king's affairs and the affairs of the realm have been directed until now to the damage and dishonour of him and his realm and to the impoverishment of his people" but "he will henceforth govern his people according to right and reason".

The first and most urgent order of business was Scotland. Asserting suzerainty over the Scots was always a Plantagenet obsession and, during the 1330s, opportunities arose courtesy of Edward Balliol, son of John Balliol who had been forced to abdicate in 1296. In 1329, David II had come to the Scottish throne but as a five-year-old child, his rule was precarious. Balliol decided to press his claim. At first, Edward only granted tacit approval to Balliol's schemes but was not displeased when Balliol secured the Scottish crown in September 1332. This triumph was, however, short-lived and Balliol was soon forced to flee to England.

It now became clear that Edward's ambitions required him to lend direct support. The capture of Berwick and Balliol's restoration swiftly followed and Edward was able to exact handsome rewards for his assistance. Balliol fully accepted his vassal status and the sheriffdoms of Berwick, Roxburgh, Peebles Selkirk, Dumfries and Edinburgh were handed over to the English. This, in effect, represented the annexation of southern Scotland.

For most of the 1330s, Scotland would continue to dominate royal policy. There were military campaigns to fight and signalling the importance of Scottish affairs, many of the offices of English government would be moved north, to York, for several years. Balliol's regime was reliant on Edward's


Alchemists preparing their mysterious materials ahead of an experiment

Deciphering nature's secrets

Throughout his life Edward, like many of his fellow rulers, was entranced by the lucrative potential of alchemy

From early in his reign, Edward III exhibited a keen interest in the perplexing arts of alchemy. During the 13th century, Western Europe, with its crowned heads in the vanguard, had become obsessed with the Arabic texts that arrived via Spain and a host of new Latin works began to appear. By the dawn of the 14th century, alchemy had emerged as a subject of reputable scholarly study and its purview extended beyond the transformation of base metals like copper and lead into precious gold and silver. The science also tackled medical mysteries, even the search for a miraculous elixir of life. Not everyone was delighted by these developments. Alchemy's critics warned against subverting the laws of nature and even suggested that some practitioners were in league with demonic forces. Many were undeterred, however, and we know that Edward summoned two experts in alchemy, William Dalby and John Rous, to demonstrate their craft in 1329.

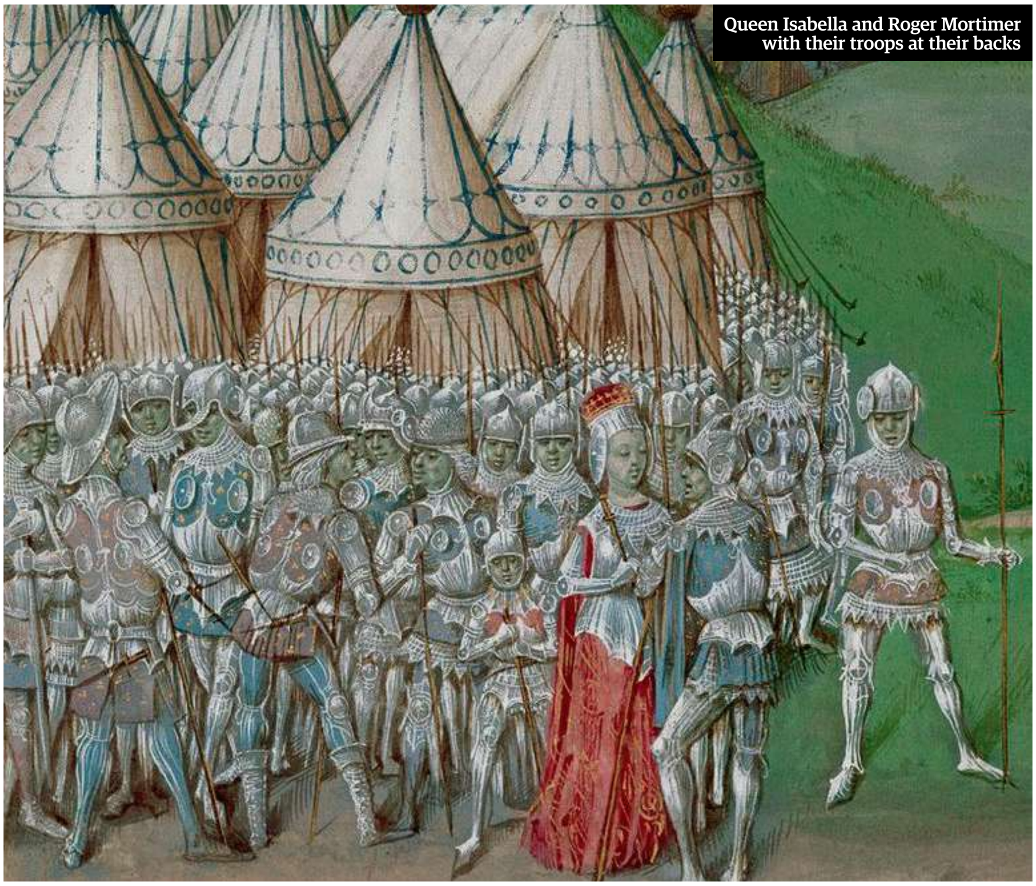
The scale of Edward's flirtation with alchemy is hard to pin down. Rumours are easier to locate than hard facts and ambitious alchemists had a habit of inventing stories of encounters with the king in order to gild their reputations. Still, Edward certainly owned numerous alchemical texts and, with so many expensive wars to fight, would doubtless have welcomed a more magical means of replenishing the royal coffers.

backing but, with the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War, priorities shifted and English interest in events north of the border waned.

On the domestic front, Edward proved to be an astute tactician. He sought to demonstrate that he would not follow his father's example of deepening divisions within the English ruling elite. He distributed rewards and preferment both to the old guard and to more recent arrivals on the political scene. It seemed that there was to be no return to the bad old days of recklessly over-indulged royal favourites such as Piers Gaveston.

By 1337, however, some of Edward's critics began to wonder if this even-handed approach to patronage was coming under threat. In that year, Edward distributed lofty titles and swathes of land and property to a group of his most loyal supporters, including those who had organised the seizure of Mortimer back in 1330. Sir Thomas Gray, for one, was rather perturbed.

"The king," Gray grumbled, "bestowed so liberally of his possessions that he retained for himself scarcely any of the lands appertaining to the crown" and was "obliged to subsist upon levies and subsidies, which were a heavy burden to his people." Gray exaggerated, but his comments revealed unwelcome tensions in the body politic at the very moment England was preparing for its long and tortuous military conflict with France.


Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer with their troops at their backs

Nottingham Castle, where Edward's supporters seized Roger Mortimer in 1330, as it stands today

A Century of Blood and Wrath

In the Hundred Years' War, England and France were embroiled in a series of bitter, bloody battles that re-shaped the future of the continent forever

The genesis of the longest-running conflict in European history finds its origins, like so many wars before and after it, in the eternal struggle for territory and an insatiable thirst for power. Ever since William the Conqueror claimed the English crown as his own, the monarchs of England had a legitimate claim to lands and titles of note in the kingdom of France. Over time these lands were reduced by a long line of French kings, but England continued to hold a stake in the future of its neighbour.

For King Edward III of England, that investment in France ran deeper – to the Plantagenet monarch it was a birthright. The death of the heirless Charles IV of France provided Edward with the opening he needed, but an old Salic Law prohibited the order of succession passing through a woman (his mother was the sister of the French king), so the crown was awarded by the French Assembly to Philip of Valois. Philip VI wasted no time undermining his rival either, including funding an invasion of England by Scottish monarch David II. The invasion failed, but a French scheme so close to home enraged Edward. In 1337, in order to quell Edward's influence on his soil, Philip confiscated the largest English fiefdom on the French mainland, Aquitaine.

In response, Edward began forming alliances with key noble families, such as the Flemings and the Montforts, Houses who cared little for the current French monarch. With Edward's own son – also named Edward and known later as the Black Prince – also conspiring on French soil to create more alliances for the English, the two nations rolled towards the first pitched confrontation of the Hundred Years' War: the Battle of Crécy.

On 26 August 1346, the army of Edward arrived near the town of Crécy in Normandy. One month prior, the English king had landed 14,000 men on Normandy's shores and began ravaging the French countryside, razing villages to the ground. Philip's army rallied to respond, and a force of 12,000 met them at Crécy. Philip's army consisted of 8,000 mounted knights and 4,000 hired Genoese crossbowmen, while the bulk of Edward's force was made up of 10,000 English archers. Those archers, armed with the unique English longbow, would make all the difference.

When Philip's forces attacked first, hoping to catch the English by the surprise, Edward's longbowmen filled the air thick with arrows and cut the charging cavalry down. The longbow also out-ranged the traditional bow designs of the French, enabling the English to significantly weaken Philip's army before the cavalry and infantry clashed. By the time night fell, more than one-third of the French army had been cut down.

Edward's victory at Crécy effectively crippled the French army and left the way open for him to continue his campaign. By 1347, Calais had fallen and the English had established a key stronghold that would enable them to bolster their campaign with fresh soldiers and supplies. The death of Charles VI in 1350, and the spread of the Black Death in Paris and beyond, only served to further the English cause.

"Led by the Black Prince, the English forces routed those of John II of France"

The French army often kept its distance over the coming years, only blocking the advance of the English with pitched battles. The largest of these to follow Crécy was at Poitiers on 19 September 1356, and it proved a familiar echo of that first battle - a French army eviscerated by loosed English arrows and the fall from grace of the mounted charge. Led by the Black Prince, the English forces routed those of John II of France, with the French king himself taken prisoner.

The Black Prince died in 1376 and so when Edward III died the following year, the crown passed to his grandson, Richard II. Just ten years old when he inherited the English throne, Richard continued the English acquisition of French lands. The damage rendered by the invading English kings was more than just economical or geographical - it destroyed any sense of French unity, as members of the nobility turned on one another. By 1407, the nation had descended into civil war as the two most powerful branches of the royal family - the Houses of Orléans and Burgundy - fought for control of the throne.

While France fractured into civil turmoil, its armies were gathered together under Charles I of Albret, the constable of France, to face the English in another decisive battle. Much like the French throne - which was now occupied by Charles VI, grandson of John II - the English crown had been worn through the bloody battles of the Hundred Years' War by a handful of kings, and its current royal claimant, Henry V, was ready to fight the battle that could potentially end the campaign for good.

Defining moment

Onset of the Hundred Years' War 1336

Tensions between England and France had simmered with barely tempered rivalry, but hostilities began to rise when Philip VI is named King of France instead of the better connected King Edward III of England. Negotiations turn black when Edward offers refuge to a defector from Philip's court, Robert III of Artois. When Edward refuses to agree to Philip's demands, the French king reacts by taking control of the English-claimed French fiefdom of Guienne/Aquitaine. Edward does not react well and declares war on France, igniting the Hundred Years' War.

Like his predecessors, Henry believed himself the rightful heir to the French throne and he famously marched to victory on the fields of Agincourt on 25 October 1415. Agincourt completed a trifecta of bloody pitched battles that crushed the forces of the French monarchy. Charles and Albret had managed to form the largest Frankish army of the conflict (estimates ranged from 12,000 to 36,000) and they outnumbered the roughly 6,000 to 9,000 men marching under Henry's banner. But Henry had learned the lessons of the war and the bulk of that number were English and Welsh longbowmen who pummelled the French archers and infantry. By the time the French had retreated, they had lost between 7,000 and 10,000 men.

The loss at Agincourt forced Charles to recognise Henry as the official heir to the throne. With the country still racked by civil war, acknowledging the military might of Henry as king was, ironically, the most stable option for the nation.

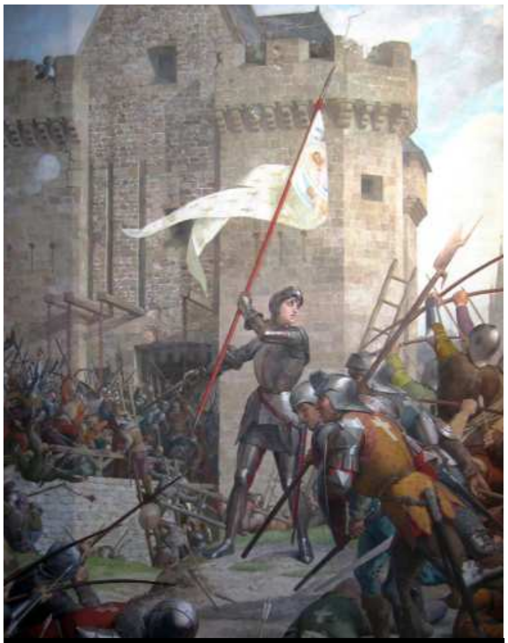
However, both Henry and Charles died within two months of one another in 1422, leaving the agreement in tatters. Both Henry's successor, Henry VI, and Charles' son, the dauphin, made claims to the throne and it would be the under the latter that the war would truly change.

Henry VI's forces pushed for an advantage as they entered the region of Orléans. In September 1428, the English king's forces began besieging the tactical linchpin that was the region's namesake, but the attack seemingly faltered under the most unlikely of sources. A peasant-born girl by the name of Joan of Arc had arrived at the court of the dauphin claiming heavenly visions of his victory against the English. She was sent with a relief force and her rallying presence helped destroy the English army. Joan would be captured shortly after but her subsequent execution by burning would only serve to fuel the fires of the French resurgence.

The martyrdom of Joan of Arc and the popularity of the dauphin eventually led one of Henry VI's most important French allies, the duke of Burgundy, to defect in 1435. Soon after, the dauphin was officially recognised as Charles VII, king of France. The nation now had a Frankish monarch to rally behind - one who was not afraid to use new innovations such as the cannon to help negate the deadly power of the English longbow.

The unification of Orléans and Burgundy under a Valois monarch was the turning point of the conflict. As the years rolled by, Charles' forces grew stronger as he drove the usurpers further and further towards the coast. On 15 April 1450, the French clashed with the English at the Battle of Formigny and crushed the forces of Henry VI with cannon, arrow and blade. The loss at Formigny broke the English and by the end of 1453, both Castilian and Calais, the last vantage points of the English invasion were crushed. And so Charles brought the Hundred Years' War to an end with a river of English blood.

Following 116 years of a conflict that nearly tore Europe apart on more than one occasion, the continent would never be the same again. The loss of every single territory in France was a humiliation that the national consciousness could not begin to comprehend, and it soon led to political infighting as Henry VI's power base crumbled. With the Plantagenet hold on the throne weakened by its warring Houses of Lancaster and York, Henry Tudor would ultimately seize power in England following


Joan of Arc was a vital part of the French campaign during the Lancastrian era of the conflict, her efforts even seeing her canonised as a result

Timeline

1328

- **The death of Charles IV of France**
Charles IV dies at Vincennes without a male heir to continue the House of Capet. His death creates a power vacuum that leads to his cousin, Philip of Valois becoming Philip VI of France.
1 February 1328

1346

- **English victory at Crécy**
The armies of Edward III of England claim a decisive early victory at the Battle of Crécy. The longbow plays a pivotal role and the battle effectively cripples the armies of France.
26 August 1346

1356

- **France crushed at Poitiers**
The English claim another powerful victory against the French near Poitiers. The French suffer catastrophic losses and the French king, John II, is captured alive.
19 September 1356

1407

- **French civil war erupts**
When the brother of Charles VI of France, Louis of Orléans, is murdered on the orders of the king's son, John the Fearless, the nation descends into a bitter war for succession.
23 November 1407

1415

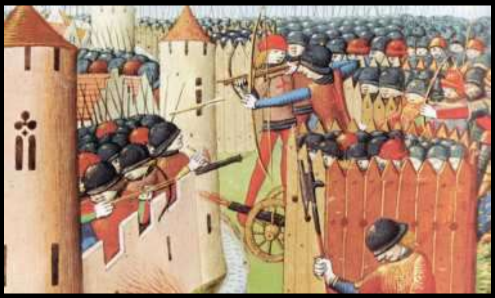
- **Henry V triumphs at Agincourt**
On the fields of Agincourt, Henry V of England claims the third of three decisive military victories over the French. His victory almost brings the conflict to an end.
25 October 1415

Fontarabia
France Armade

The Hundred Years' War may have been one that relied predominantly on cavalry and infantry, but there were still a number of naval battles as English vessels clashed with those of France

the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. For France, the victories at the end of the Hundred Years' War were a bittersweet success.

For the next years of his reign, Charles VII began rebuilding a nation that was now finally united under one banner. He introduced new reforms to taxation and social structure, enabling France to begin reigniting the grand scale of its economy. A popular man for most of his reign, the resounding success at the end of war gave Charles VII the opportunity to heal his kingdom following a century of bloody war and civil conflict.



The rise of gunpowder and guns in warfare

Think of famous battles such as the bloody encounter at Agincourt and the image of the longbow, cutting down ranks in their droves, springs to mind. It was a weapon that changed the course of the war, but it's easy to forget just how much military engineering transformed over those 116 years.

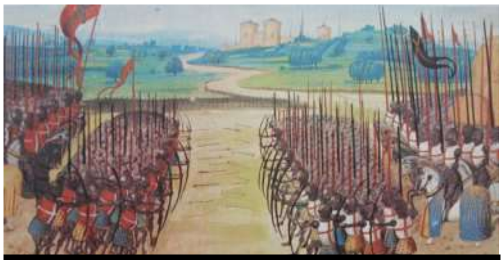
The introduction of gunpowder to the battlefields was a slow one, only serving to present a token sense of variety at Agincourt, but as the conflict entered its final years the use of artillery became a significant tactic. The first cannons were stationary, difficult to work and short of range, but by the 1380s artillery was mobile and could wipe out advancing troops like a burning hand of God.

The advancements in gunpowder improved fastest for the French, which was a significant influence during the war's final confrontations. Battles such as at Castillon in 1453, proved the French cannon to be more effective at a longer range, rendering the English longbow obsolete.

Defining moment

Treaty of Troyes is signed 1420

Following the decisive victory at Agincourt, the further acquisition of French territory by the English and the seemingly never-ending civil war France was forced to officially recognise Henry V's claims on the French throne. The issue of succession had led to the assassination of Charles VI's brother and the eventual disinheritance of the Dauphin, John the Fearless. With the throne left weakened in the wake of the king's growing bouts of madness, the official naming of Henry as heir was the best option France had to restore some semblance of order to the highest seat of office in the land.



One of the most famous battles of the 116-year-long conflict was the one fought on the fields of Agincourt, where two armies waged war with longbows

Defining moment

The Hundred Years' War ends 1453

With Charles VII's acquisition of Aquitaine and Normandy, English control in France is destroyed, the territory claimed by Henry V over three decades before lost in a series of military blunders and decisive defeats. France bands under the banner of Charles and seeks to make the nation whole again by besting an enemy that had conquered them at Agincourt. The loss of so much continental territory is a huge blow for the English and leads to years of conflict between the Houses of Lancaster and York, culminating in the Wars of the Roses.

1429

Joan of Arc liberates Orléans
Joan of Arc, a peasant-born woman who claims heavenly visions sent her to support Charles VII of France, helps liberate Orléans from the English in the first true decisive victory for the French.
8 May 1429

1431

Joan of Arc is burned at the stake
Following her capture at Compiègne, the English and the Spanish Inquisition charge her with heresy and have her burned at the stake. She is just 19 years of age. She is later canonised.
30 May 1431

1435

The Treaty of Arras
Charles VII of France signs a treaty with England and Burgundy, effectively ending the civil war. France can finally begin to consolidate its resources into a single entity. The Hundred Years' War continues.
21 September 1435

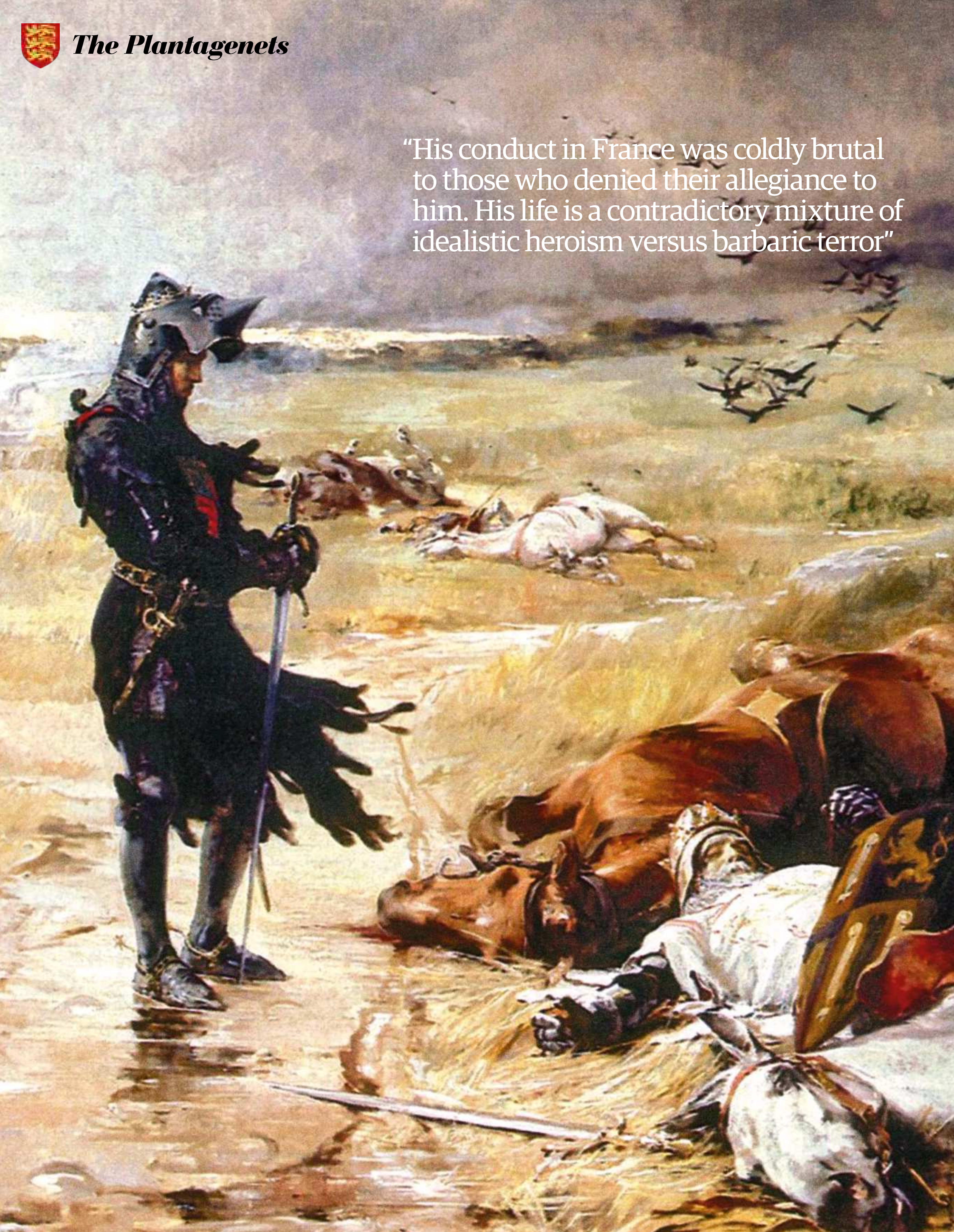
1450

Cannons elevate the French
The use of artillery at the Battle of Formigny provides France with a powerful and defiant means of destroying the longbow-dependant armies of the English. English control in France is waning.
15 April 1450

1453

Battle of Castillon
A crucial victory for the French in Gascony near the town of Castillon-sur-Dordogne crushes the English forces in France, forcing them to retreat to their last true stronghold in Calais.
17 July 1453

© Alamy, Getty Images



"His conduct in France was coldly brutal to those who denied their allegiance to him. His life is a contradictory mixture of idealistic heroism versus barbaric terror"

1330-76

Edward the Black Prince

Known to history as the Black Prince, the eldest son of Edward III was a renowned military commander, with a reputation for chivalry, as well as a penchant for mass destruction and calculated violence

On the evening of 19 September 1356, the heir to the throne of the England entertained the king of France in his tent, near the town of Poitiers in western France. However, this was no ordinary royal meeting. The king had been captured on the field of battle and was at the mercy of one of the most legendary figures in Medieval history. Although he was only in his mid-20s, Edward, Prince of Wales, was at the pinnacle of his military career. His life personally symbolises the first half of the Hundred Years' War, when England fought for the right to wear the French crown.

Edward, along with his father and namesake Edward III, epitomises the martial glory of the initial English victories and gained a reputation for courage and chivalry. However, Edward is known to history as the 'Black Prince', and, in many ways, his conduct in France was coldly brutal to those who denied their allegiance to him. His life was a contradictory mixture of idealistic heroism and barbaric terror.

Born in 1330, Edward was brought up to be a soldier. In the Medieval world, the ideal king had to be a warrior and Edward III wanted his son to be in military training from an early age. At the age of seven, Edward had already been equipped with a complete suit of armour and in the same year the conflict that would become known as the Hundred Years' War began. Prince Edward would spend the rest of his life vigorously, and sometimes controversially, fighting his father's cause and his military career began in earnest at the age of 16.

> The English rammed and boarded Castilian ships, before the crews clashed on the decks

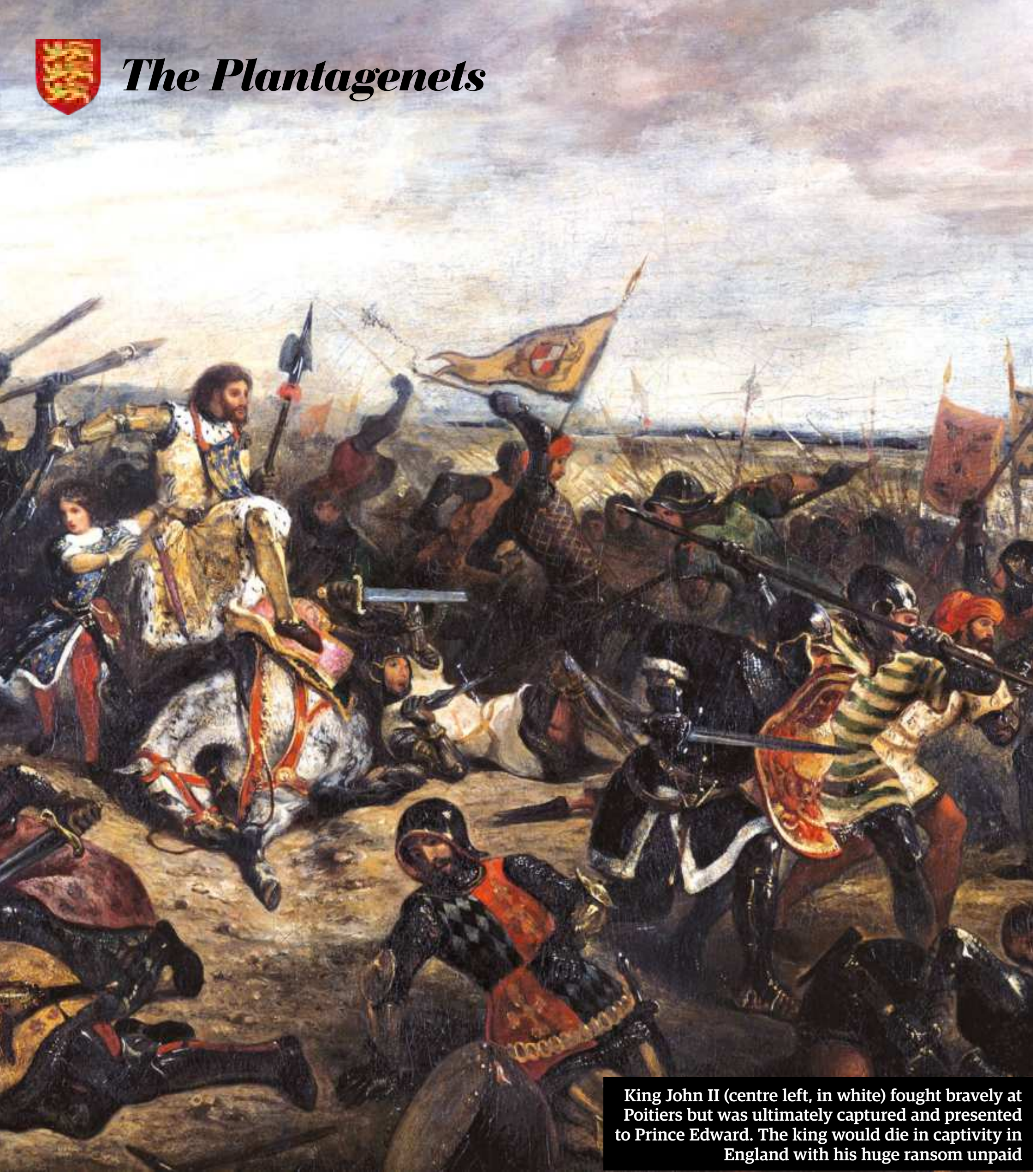
Winning his spurs

In July 1346, Edward III's army landed unopposed in France at La Hogue. The following day the king knighted Prince Edward to mark the beginning of his career as a soldier. The prince immediately exercised his rights to create other knights and in the subsequent march across Normandy the vanguard was nominally under his command. The French caught up with the English on the north bank of the River Somme and Edward III selected a site near the village of Crécy in order to give battle.

The English numbered between 9,000 and 12,000 men but were fighting a French army of about 30,000 under King Philip VI. Edward III deployed his men in defensive order on a hill with archers and two divisions in the front, and the king's division forming the reserve. Prince Edward was in the centre of his men, surrounded by his household knights and two earls. Although the French and Genoese soldiers were continually harassed by English longbows, the brunt of the hand-to-hand fighting fell on Prince Edward's men.

Young Edward was in the thick of the fighting from the outset, and many stories are now attached to his conduct. It was reported that the duke of Alençon, who led the first French charge, beat down the prince's standard before he was killed.

A second French charge penetrated into Edward's division and the prince was in considerable personal danger, with some saying that he was forced to his knees and captured by the count of Hainault before being rescued by his standard-bearer Sir Richard Fitz-Simon. In what would normally have been a



King John II (centre left, in white) fought bravely at Poitiers but was ultimately captured and presented to Prince Edward. The king would die in captivity in England with his huge ransom unpaid

> "When Edward III eventually sent 20 knights to rescue his son, he found the prince and his men resting and leaning on their swords, having repulsed the French attack"

serious breach of discipline, Fitz-Simon had to lower his banner in order to defend the prince.

One of the most famous stories concerns the messenger sent to Edward III at the moment of crisis to request help for the prince. The king reputedly replied, "Let the boy win his spurs." When Edward III eventually sent 20 knights to rescue his son, he found the prince and his men resting and leaning on their swords, having repulsed the French attack.

Prince Edward's courage during his first major engagement at the Battle of Crécy impressed his contemporaries. According to legend, he honoured the memory of the slain, blind King John of Bohemia by adopting his personal badge of three feathers as his own, which is still the symbol of the Prince of Wales today.

There was, however, a contrasting response to the knightly bravura. According to a Hainault chronicler, when Edward III asked his son what he thought of going into battle it is reported that the prince "said nothing and was ashamed". If this account were true, then it would be at odds with Edward's later behaviour on the battlefield.

Clash on the waves

After Crécy, the French signed a truce with the English that was prolonged by the outbreak of the deadly Black Death. By the summer of 1350 the war was resumed. English plans for an Anglo-Castilian marriage alliance involving Edward's sister Joan fell apart when she died of the plague. The French seized this opportunity to encourage the Castilians to send a large fleet to harass shipping in the English Channel.

By July 1350, the English had assembled a fleet at Sandwich and in mid-August a Castilian host was off Winchelsea. Both Prince Edward and his father embarked on 28 August and on the next evening the two fleets engaged. The English rammed and boarded Castilian ships before the crews clashed on the decks. In the fray, the king's ship was sunk and Edward III had to scramble aboard a Castilian ship. Similarly, Prince Edward's ship was sinking when his brother John sailed alongside and rescued him. The battle was a fierce contest but ended with the retreat of the Castilians at twilight, with the remainder being captured by the English.

Afterwards the king and his sons anchored at Winchelsea and Rye and they conscripted horses from the towns to convey the news to Queen Philippa. It is recorded that the royal family spent the night revelling and recounting tales of the day's fighting, which appears to be a coldly decadent contrast to the maritime slaughter that had taken place only hours before.

Edward III made much of his naval victory and the new coinage of 1351 reflected his claim to be the 'King of the Sea' with the martial monarch shown to be standing in a ship. As for Prince Edward, the fight at Winchelsea only served to enhance his warrior reputation, which would increase in the years ahead. His career would also begin to be tainted by a harshness in his conduct of the war in France.

Le terrible Prince Noir

Final truces with France ended in the mid 1350s and Prince Edward was granted his own theatre of operations in Gascony, which at that time was an English possession. The prince was enthusiastic and wrote that he "prayed the king to grant him leave to be the first to pass beyond the sea". He formally sailed to southwest France with full powers to administer English territories there. He also received a military contract of service, which made provisions for events such as the capture of "the head of the war" (the main French commander) and the prince's own possible capture.

Edward landed at Bordeaux on 20 September 1355 and his combined Anglo-Gascon army of 6-8,000 men set out on 5 October with the aim of conducting a 'chevauchée' - a raid designed to weaken the enemy's supplies and prestige by deliberately burning and pillaging towns and villages. It was effectively a form of authorised terrorism and was used throughout the Hundred Years' War, with Edward helping to legitimise this wanton destruction.

The prince's target in 1355 was the land of Jean d'Armagnac, who had been appointed by John II of France to put pressure on English territories. Once his army reached enemy lands on 10 October, it moved into three columns and spread out to live off the land and a fortnight was spent ravaging d'Armagnac lands. The army even had portable bridges to increase the range of the pillaging. Edward then moved into Languedoc and was able to inflict considerable damage on local towns, including the town of Carcassonne, which he seized and burned.

By 8 November he had reached the furthest point of his march at Narbonne on the Mediterranean shore where the town was taken despite fierce

Prince Edward took part in the naval Battle of Winchelsea in 1350. The English victory encouraged Edward III to issue new coinage in 1351 depicting him as 'King of the Sea'

resistance - but its castle held out. Edward returned to friendly territory on 27 November, having not once engaged the French in open battle. The French had deliberately avoided him, making them appear hesitant and thereby giving the prince a propaganda victory.

The chevauchée was a nightmare for the people of southern France. At Montisgard it was recorded that men, women and children were slaughtered indiscriminately and this was a scene that was repeated across the region. In the 19th century, carbonised remains of burnt grain could still be found in the ruins of Montbrun-Lauragais and it was said that even the pope feared for his safety at Avignon. It is likely that Edward's famous nickname originates from this raid - in the parts that he passed through he was known as 'le terrible Prince Noir'. The damage was such that well into the 20th century there was a local oral tradition among peasants in the region who related stories about a figure known as 'L'Homme Noir' who had passed by with an army in the Middle Ages.

The chevauchée also disrupted the economic productivity of the region and consequently the French ability to withstand English attacks was diminished. Edward's steward explained, "The countryside and towns which have been destroyed in this raid produced more revenue for the king of France in aid of his wars than half his kingdom." In December 1355, Edward justified the raid in a letter to the Bishop of Winchester: "We rode afterwards through the land of Armagnac, harrying and wasting the country, whereby the lieges of our said most honoured lord, whom the count had before oppressed, were much comforted." Edward was implying that the local nobility were grateful for his intervention but was apparently unconcerned about the suffering that his army committed. This coldness implies that Edward only reserved his chivalric behaviour for fellow members of the nobility.

Triumph at Poitiers

In August 1356, Edward launched another chevauchée into France from Aquitaine. He adopted a scorched earth policy as he advanced north to ease pressure on English garrisons in northern and central France, but was stopped at Tours when he failed to take the castle. At the same time, he heard that John II was marching south from Normandy to destroy his army at Tours, so Edward began to retreat back towards Bordeaux but the French king caught up with him near Poitiers.

At this stage, Edward offered to give up the loot his army had stolen in exchange for a safe passage but this was rebuffed. With no options left, he turned his Anglo-Gascon army of 6,000 men to face a French army of at least 20,000 on 19 September. He formed his army into three divisions with his archers on the flanks and retained his own division in the rear with an elite cavalry unit. Edward then arranged his men behind a low hedge for protection, with marshes to the left and wagons to the right.

King John arranged his own men into four 'battles' led by himself, the dauphin, Baron Clermont and the duke of Orléans. Both the dauphin and Clermont attacked the English but were swept back by hails of arrows and counterattacks by English men-at-arms. The dauphin's forces then crashed into Orléans' approaching division before running into John's division, causing confusion. Had the French not panicked at this stage, they could have routed Edward's men, who were becoming exhausted and had started to collect their wounded. Instead, Edward ordered his men to break cover from the hedge and charge the French while simultaneously launching his cavalry to flank the enemy. After a hard fight, the English stood their ground and the French line collapsed.

It was a huge victory for Edward. At a minimal cost, 2,000 Frenchmen were killed with another 2,000 captured including the biggest prize: King John II. He was brought to Edward's tent, where the prince served him and according to one chronicler said that John's personal bravery "had outdone his own greatest knights". This was little consolation to John who was taken back to England in triumph.

Edward was treated to a great procession in London, where the water conduits apparently ran with wine, while John wore a sombre black robe. He had good reason to - his capture had huge ramifications in France where his ransom was more than the yearly income of the country. Some said it was twice as much and John eventually died in English captivity, with his country in a broken state of anarchy.

Into darkness

Poitiers was the pinnacle of Edward's military career and he seemed ready to succeed his father as a powerful King Edward IV of England. He ruled Aquitaine as a semi-independent principality

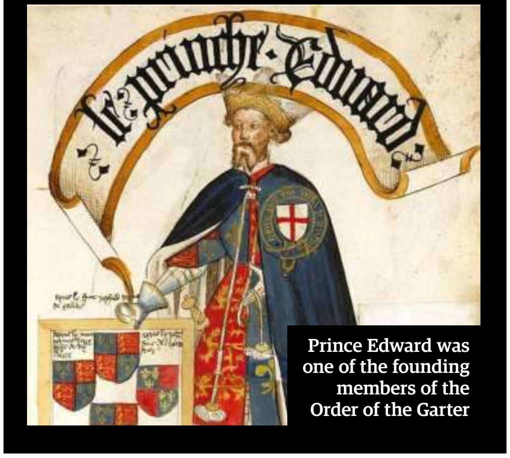
> "It was effectively a form of authorised terrorism, and was used throughout the Hundred Years' War, with Edward helping to legitimise this wanton destruction"

The Garter

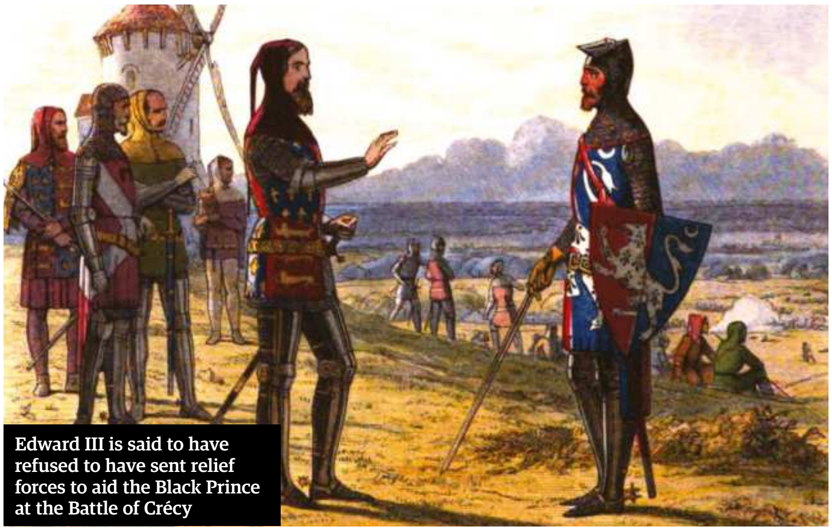
The Prince of Wales helped to found one of the United Kingdom's most prestigious honours

Prince Edward was actively involved in the foundation of the Order of the Garter in what is usually accepted as 1348. Today it is the third most prestigious honour that the British state can award after the Victoria and George Crosses, with membership numbers always capped at 24 Companions. It has a reputation for epitomising the chivalric knightly ideal but its foundation was grounded much more in the power politics of the time. The Order was designed to bring together the inner circle of Edward III's military commanders in France, who also happened to be his companions in the jousting arena. Some of the earliest records of the Order's existence come from Prince Edward's wardrobe accounts. In December 1348 Edward's wardrobe keeper bought 24 garters that were given to the first knights at an unspecified date. At the home of the Order in Saint George's Chapel, Windsor, one of the sets of facing stalls was designated for Edward III and the other designated for Prince Edward.

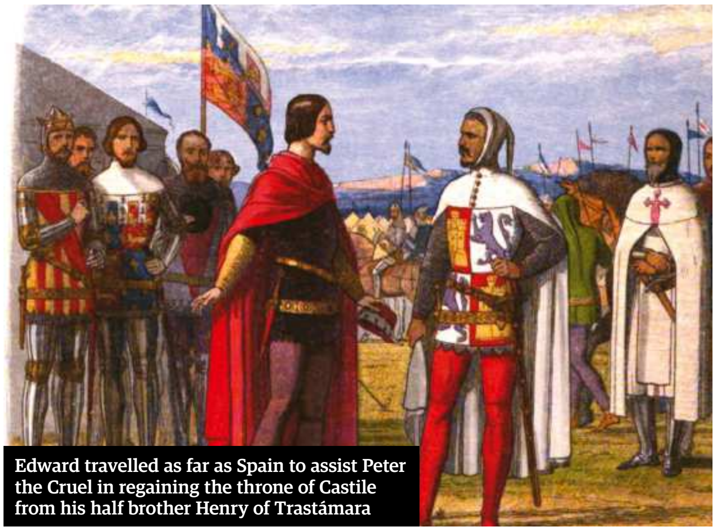
The reason for the Order's foundation is generally accepted as being political, which is reflected in the choice of heraldry and motto. On the Order's badge the gold and blue of France is combined with words that refer to the English claim to the French throne, 'Shame on him who thinks evil of it'. The romantic origins for the Order were invented in later years and have no basis in reality. Indeed, the Order was effectively an official celebration of the English victory at Crécy and cemented the companionship of the king, prince and nobles who had taken part. The choice of the garter itself possibly originated in a tournament badge, particularly as it had the practical advantage that it could be worn outside armour.



Prince Edward was one of the founding members of the Order of the Garter



Edward III is said to have refused to have sent relief forces to aid the Black Prince at the Battle of Crécy



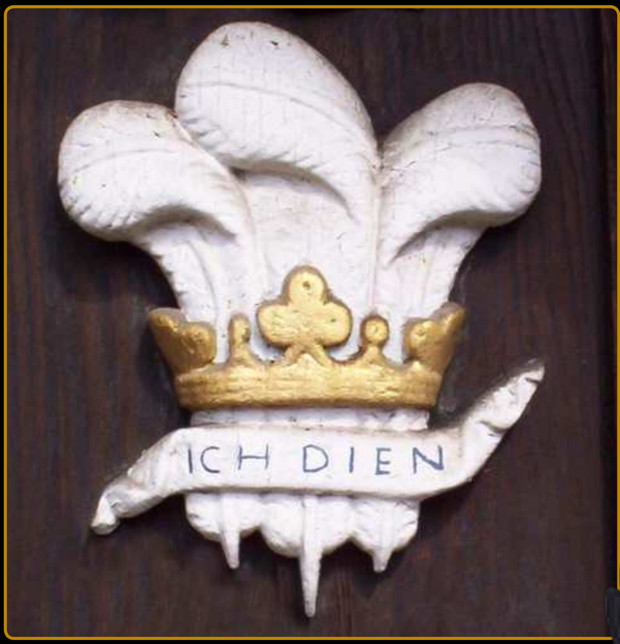
Edward travelled as far as Spain to assist Peter the Cruel in regaining the throne of Castile from his half brother Henry of Trastámara

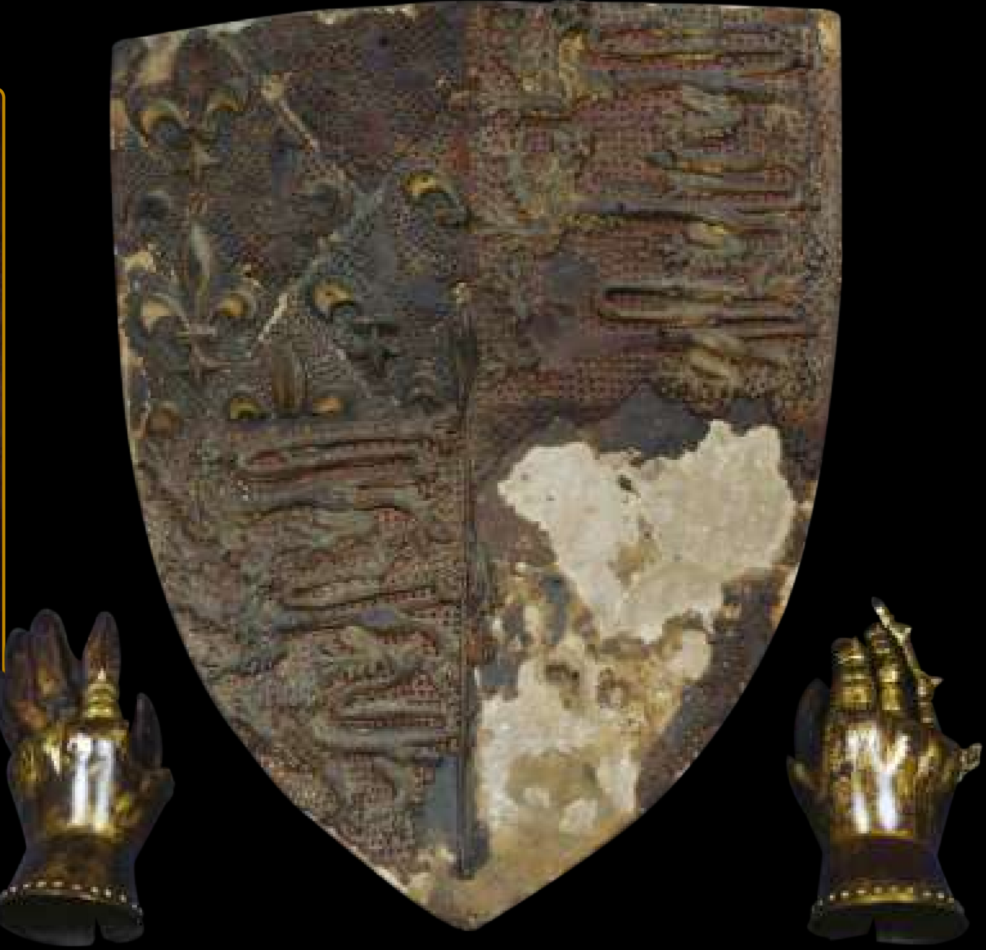
between the years of 1360 and 1367, and he won a further dramatic victory in Spain at Nájera in 1367. But after the Spanish campaign his health began to deteriorate rapidly. In a highly controversial incident at the Siege of Limoges in 1370, a now litter-bound prince ordered the sacking of the captured town. According to the chronicler, Jean Froissart, "It was a most melancholy business; for all ranks, ages and sexes cast themselves on their knees before the prince, begging for mercy; but he was so inflamed with passion and revenge that he listened to none, but all were put to the sword, wherever they could be found." This has since been highly disputed among historians but whatever the truth, Limoges greatly stained Edward's reputation.

The prince's health continued to deteriorate and he died aged 46 in 1376, just one year before his father. The once mighty prince never became king of England - his son would take that role in his place as Richard II - and instead he left a mixed legacy behind of military glory, selective chivalry and a bitter memory of brutal bloodshed.

> "At the Siege of Limoges in 1370, a now litter-bound prince ordered the sacking of the captured town"

Edward died in 1376 and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral, the first Prince of Wales never to succeed to the throne of England





ABOVE: A painted carving of the Prince of Wales' three feathers on the main gate at Oriel College, Oxford

RIGHT Displaying the equipment (known as 'achievements') of a dead knight was a common Medieval practice, particularly in England

The Black Prince's shield & gauntlets

The equipment of the famous - if controversial - heir to the English throne are vivid survivors from a prolonged and brutal Medieval conflict

Edward of Woodstock, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine, has gone down as a legendary figure in English Medieval history. As the eldest son of the warrior king Edward III, the prince followed in his father's footsteps to become of the greatest soldiers of his age and is known for his campaigns against the French during the Hundred Years' War.

Invested as Prince of Wales in 1343, the teenaged Edward soon gained military experience and "won his spurs" at the English victory of Crécy in 1346, where led the vanguard at the age of just 16. He then went on to win victory after victory in battle.

Legend dictates that it was the Black Prince who first bore the arms of the Prince of Wales that we know today, consisting of three ostrich feathers emerging from a gold coronet with the motto 'Ich Dien' - German for 'I serve' - written underneath on a dark blue ribbon. It is believed that this motto was adopted after the Battle of Crécy as it was used by the defeated King John of Bohemia. The feathers were also used as part of the arms of the family of Philippa of Hainault, Edward's mother.

The prince died prematurely in his mid-40s, possibly from an illness contracted while he was fighting at Nájera, while his father was still alive and so he never became king. In his will, which was drawn up as he lay dying in Westminster Palace, Edward had asked to be buried in Canterbury Cathedral, and he was laid to rest in a magnificent tomb near the famous shrine and murder spot of Saint Thomas Becket. However, he had been asked to be buried in the chantry chapel.

As part of the funeral ceremonies, some of the prince's arms and armour were hung above his tomb, which included the shield and gauntlets pictured above. These objects are still displayed in the cathedral in Kent, although they are now kept behind safety glass.

The gauntlets are made of copper gilt and lined with doeskin, while Edward's shield is made of poplar wood and covered with canvas, gesso, parchment and leather. The front of the shield displays the quartered arms of England and France that Edward III used to demonstrate his right to the French throne, thereby turning the weapon into Medieval propaganda. Objects like these were also meant to symbolise the honourable and chivalric nature of a knight's life, which was ironic given the routinely dark nature of the Black Prince.

1340-99

John of Gaunt

Edward III's third son was wealthy, powerful and ostentatious

In terms of reputation John, Duke of Lancaster, was unfortunate to have grown up in the shadow of his father and his eldest brother, the Black Prince. By the time he began to take a leading role in national and international affairs, the king and his heir were both sick and close to death and John had no prospect of inheriting the crown as long as his infant nephew, the future Richard II, survived.

John could claim no spectacular military successes to boost his standing at home, and he could do very little to halt the recovery of French fortunes on the continent, which cancelled out most of the gains achieved by the Treaty of Brétigny. He was, however, able to accumulate, largely through marriage, considerable lands and titles on both sides of the English Channel.

John, the third son of Edward III by his wife, Philippa of Hainault, was born in 1340 in Ghent in the county of Hainault. At that time, it was anglicised as 'Gaunt', hence the prince's nickname John of Gaunt. He married Blanche, the daughter and, eventually, sole heir of Henry, Duke of Lancaster, the most powerful magnate in northern England, in 1359. At about the same time, he began to take part in his father's military campaigns against the kings of France. In 1362, by which time the title 'duke of Lancaster' had fallen into abeyance, it was re-created by the king and bestowed on John.

His political importance really began in 1367 when the Black Prince made his fateful intervention in Castile in support of the deposed King Peter. It was largely thanks to John's generalship that a major victory was won at Nájera and Peter was restored to his throne. But from this point on, English fortunes on the continent fell into disarray.

John retreated to Aquitaine with his sick brother and the remnants of their army, only to be faced by a rebellion that had been stirred up by the French king Charles V. He was present at the sack of Limoges in 1370 that not only dented the Black Prince's reputation, but spread resentment throughout Aquitaine. Meanwhile, Peter of Castile had been murdered, leaving two daughters. To gain allies against France, John and his younger brother married the two sisters in 1371 (Blanche had died in 1368). Through his new wife, Constance, John laid claim - unsuccessfully - to the crown of Castile and set up a court in exile. His pretensions ended in ignominious

John the Lollard

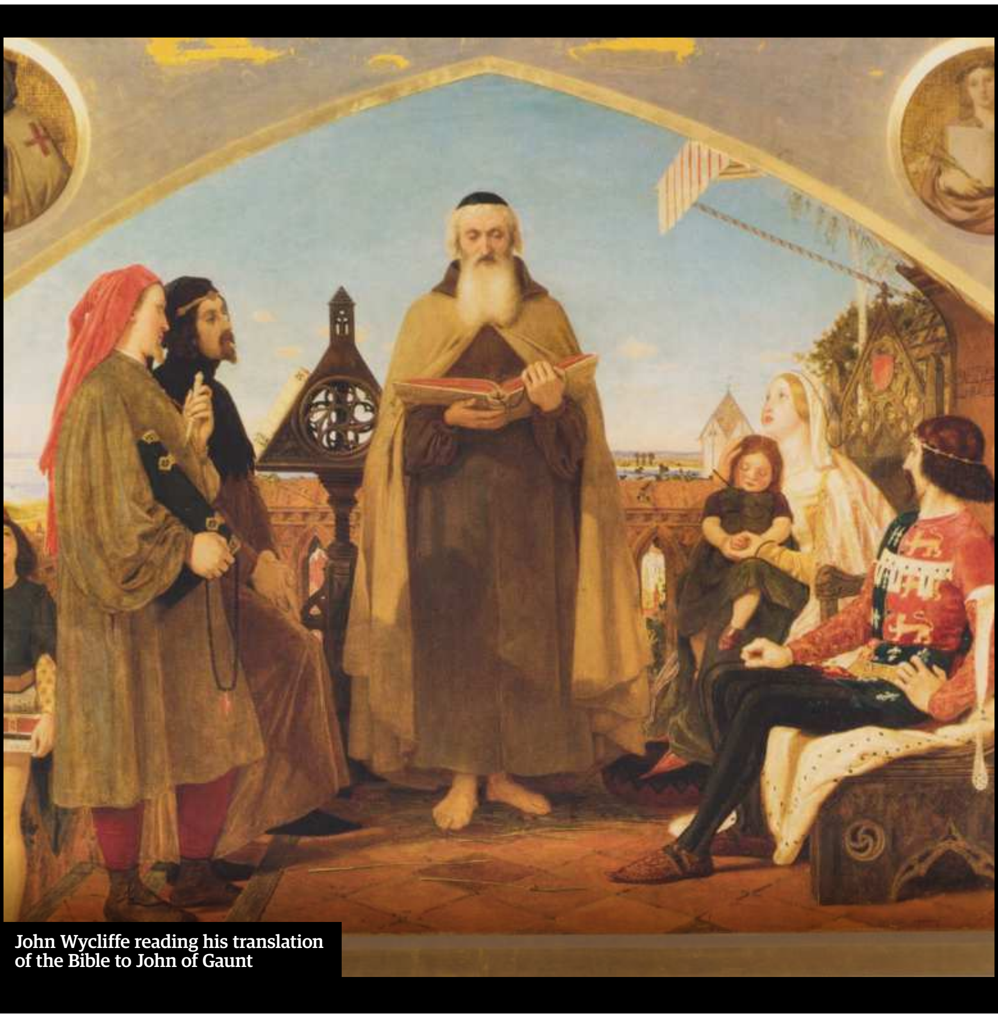
Gaunt's support succoured the spread of the 'English heresy'

Among the enemies John of Gaunt managed to attract were several leaders of the Church. He shared the resentment felt by many concerning the privileges enjoyed by the clergy including tax exemption, freedom from prosecution in crown courts, the wealth of bishops and abbeys and the 'interference' of the pope in major Church appointments.

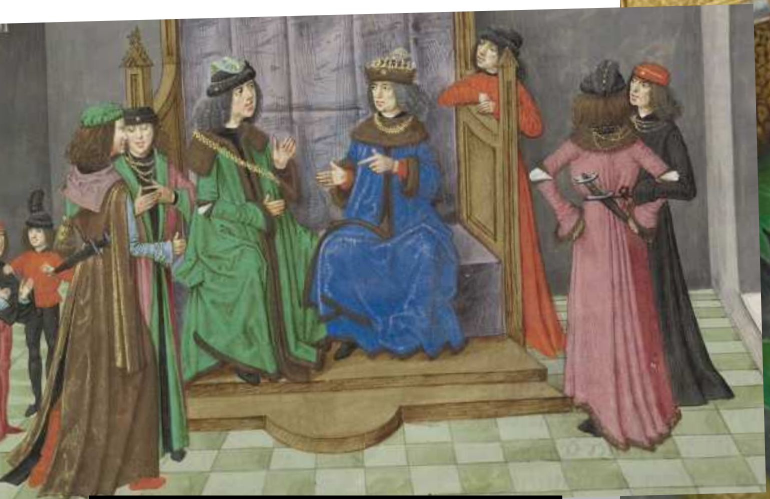
Someone else who felt strongly on these issues was the influential Oxford scholar and preacher John Wycliffe. His anticlericalism went much further, though, because he provided theological reasons for rejecting certain doctrines. He taught that the ultimate Church authority was the Bible, not the pope. "All Christians and lay lords in particular ought to know holy writ," Wycliffe declared, and, because the Bible only existed in Latin, he set about translating it into English.

The duke saw the propaganda value of Wycliffe's message and extended his patronage to him. When the bishop of London ordered Wycliffe to appear before him in 1377 to face heresy charges, he was alarmed to find John of Gaunt in the audience. The assembly broke up in confusion when the duke threatened to drag the bishop out by the hair if he tried to proceed. When the pope condemned Wycliffe, the government prevented any sanctions being carried out. The 'heretic' continued his work in peace.

Others joined in the work of translating the Bible. The unorthodox opinions spread and many groups of so-called 'Lollards' continued to meet in secret over the next 150 years. This 'English heresy' flourished despite persecution and eventually fed into what would become the English Reformation under Henry VIII.



John Wycliffe reading his translation of the Bible to John of Gaunt



John of Gaunt consulting with King John I of Portugal

defeat when he attempted to invade Castile in 1387, and affairs in England and Aquitaine were scarcely any better. The death of the Black Prince in 1376, followed by that of Edward III in 1377, left John as the effective leader of the English government. But he found himself opposed by the 'Good Parliament', so called because it was attempting to clean up the administration that was dominated by the unpopular John and Edward III's mistress, Alice Perrers.

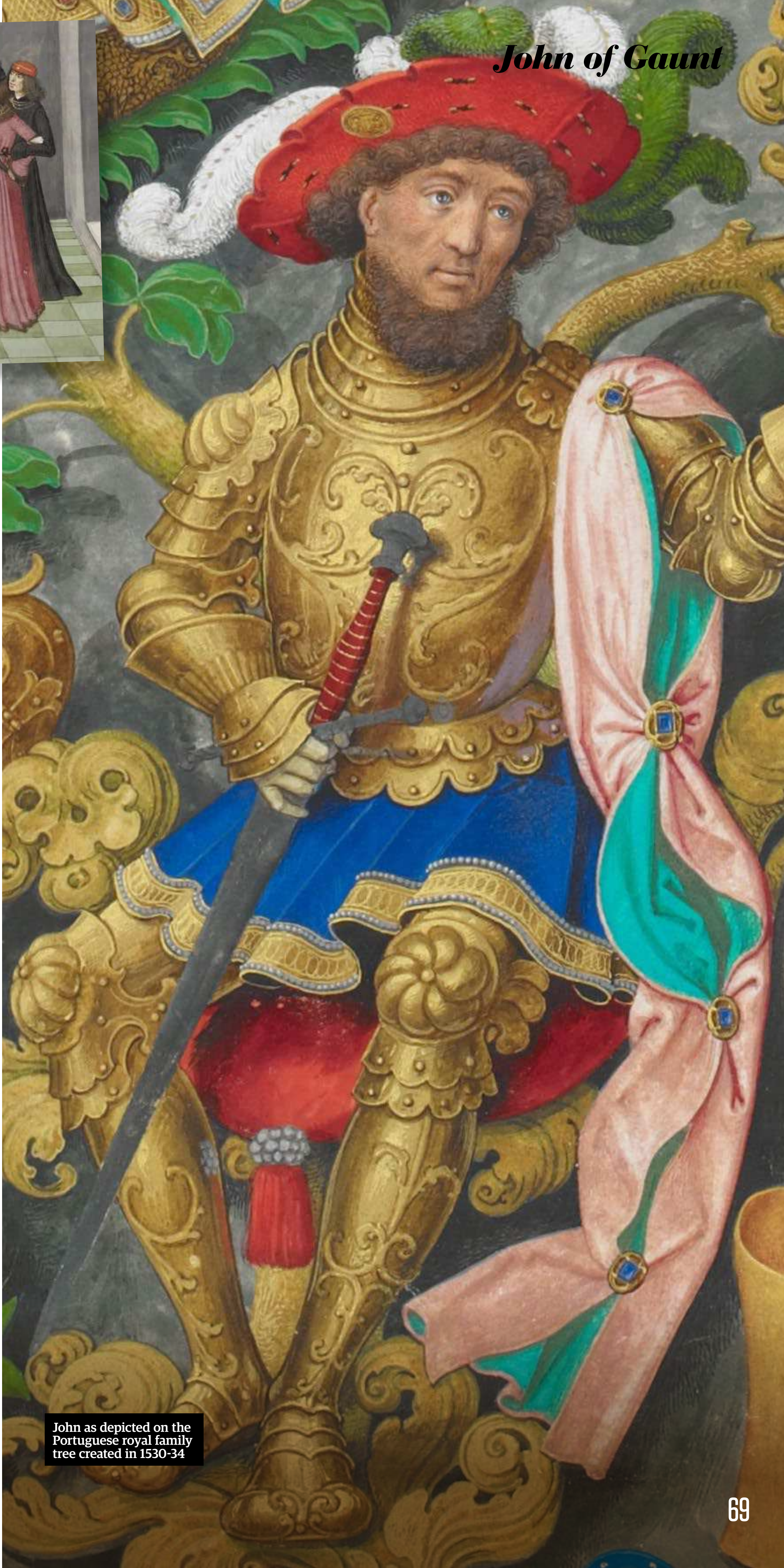
The members resented the taxes being imposed for the continuance of a now-unpopular war. The duke's personal reputation was not enhanced by his building of a magnificent palace, the Savoy, beside the Thames outside London. When the Peasants' Revolt broke out in 1381, this building became the focus of the people's anger. A violent mob destroyed it and its contents entirely. The rebels vowed that they would take John by force and execute him, so he was obliged to go into hiding until the fracas was over.

In the short term, John won his stand-off with the Good Parliament. After the death of Edward the Black Prince, he had it dissolved and replaced by another assembly, inevitably known popularly as the 'Bad Parliament', which rescinded the reforms its predecessor had imposed and instigated a flat-rate poll (head) tax on everyone aged 14 and over.

In 1390, John was made duke of Aquitaine and he played his part in negotiations with France which led to a truce and, eventually, to the marriage of Richard II and Isabella of France, causing a cessation of hostilities. However, John was no more popular in Aquitaine than he had been in England – the nobles resented not being enfeoffed as directed to the crown.

As Richard II grew up, relations with his uncle fluctuated and he was suspected of wanting his own son, Henry, named as heir to the English crown. Never a man to care much about popular opinion, John caused a scandal in 1396 by taking his long-term mistress, Katherine Swynford, as his third wife. The following year, he took the lead in suppressing a coup that was supported by his youngest brother, the duke of Gloucester.

The young king still felt himself in pawn to the elder members of his family, the dukes of Lancaster and York, especially as they opposed his lack of enthusiasm for continuance of the French war. In what seemed to him a clever political move, he sent John's son Henry into exile. John didn't long survive the disgrace as he died in February 1399. Soon afterwards, King Richard confiscated much of his property – an act that sparked the Wars of the Roses.



John as depicted on the Portuguese royal family tree created in 1530-34

Time Traveller's Handbook
BLACK DEATH

England, 14th century

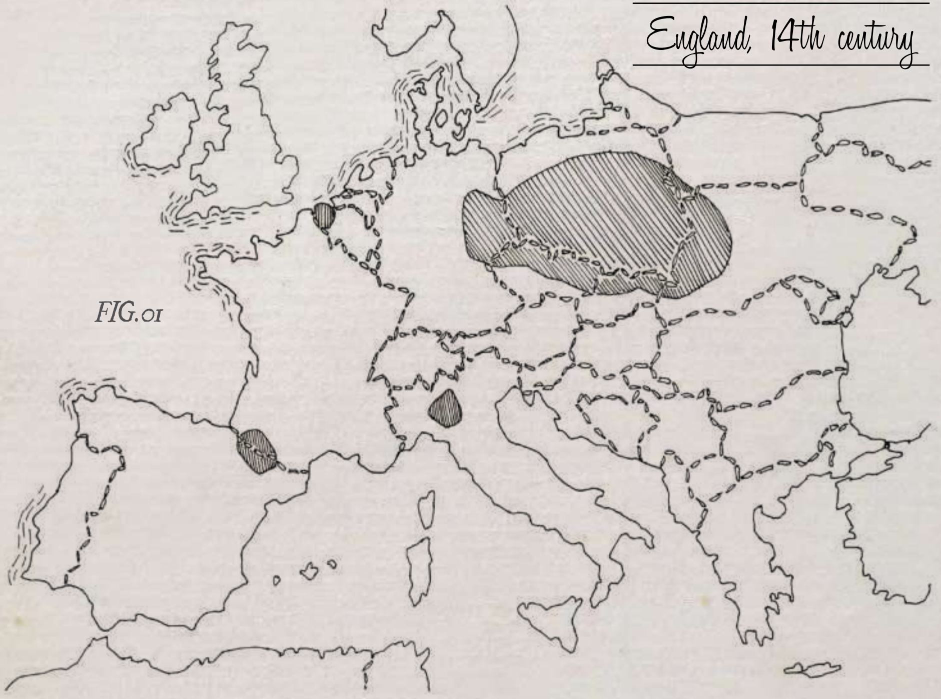


FIG.01

Originating in central Asia, the Black Death has travelled along the Silk Road and hit central Europe at rapid and unstoppable speed. By June 1348, it has reached England, which is in the process of evolving into a formidable power. However, the country is completely unprepared for the disease. Medical knowledge is minimal and rulers have no idea where the illness has come from or how it is spreading. In a time when religious fervour is rampant, people have looked to the heavens for an answer, and their faith in the church has been rocked after receiving none. With no way of fighting it, the plague has spread rapidly, and within a year has covered the country, wiping out half of the population.

FIG.02

WHERE TO STAY

There is no single safe place to stay to escape the disease. If just one person brings the plague to even the most remote of villages, it can devastate it in a matter of weeks. The geographical spread of the disease is fairly even all over England, but survivors are often those in higher society who are able to escape as soon as the plague hits. It's a good idea to avoid squalid and dirty places and stick to isolated rural manor houses. The plague will spread rapidly in large cities like London, and also places with continental links, such as East Anglia. It is advisable to find a way into places like Hartlebury Castle in Worcestershire. The estate only has a 19 per cent mortality rate, far lower than the average, and the castle is a heavily fortified manor house, perfect for keeping plague-ridden peasants away.

Dos & Don'ts

☑ **Keep yourself clean, healthy and fit.** The plague strikes those at their most frail - if you stay in good health, you're more likely to be spared.

☑ **Look out for symptoms.** Black spots on the skin, buboes in the groin, neck and armpit, a fever and vomiting blood are all telltale signs you have the plague.

☑ **Make sure you're ready to leave at a moment's notice.** The quicker you can escape when the plague hits, the better your chances of survival.

☑ **Keep your spirits up.** Plague-ridden Medieval Europe is one of the worst places to be in history, but those who survive will live well into their 70s and 80s.

☒ **Go near London.** The capital is a breeding ground for filth, disease and death. It's just not worth the risk.

☒ **Take any of the whacky cures or preventions offered by plague doctors.** None of them will work.

☒ **Pay your respects.** Many bodies are left to rot in houses, and those that are disposed of are done so crudely.

☒ **Bother trying to escape to elsewhere in Europe.** Almost the entire continent is ravaged and some European countries, like France, Spain and Italy, are suffering worse than England.

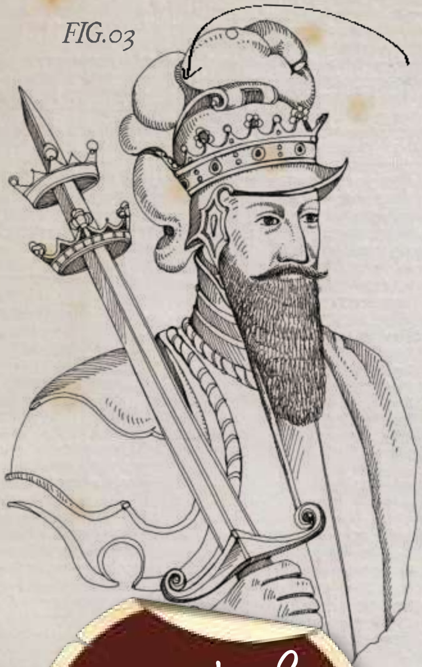


FIG.03

Did you know?
The Black Death won't be a single outbreak. It will continue to strike Europe until the 18th century

WHO TO BEFRIEND

Nobody has the answer to rid England of the plague, so looking for a cure is hopeless. However, a particular class of people appear to be far less susceptible to it than others - the rich. Only one member of the royal family - Edward III's daughter, Joan - will be claimed by the plague, and she will be in France at the time. Befriending a king can be difficult, but not impossible. Your best option is to get in with members of the king's council, like chief justice William de Shareshull. Be careful though - being close to the king doesn't guarantee survival. When the plague reappears in 1361, many of Edward's trusted earls and captains will succumb to it.

Extra tip: In such a religious society, many people will rush to the clergy for advice. The monasteries will fill up with sick people and those who care for them will be ravaged by the disease. Because of their contact with the sick, the clergy will suffer horrific losses, and monasteries and convents will be deserted en masse. Although these members of the church may seem to offer comfort, you're best to stay away from them and avoid getting swept up in the religious fervour.

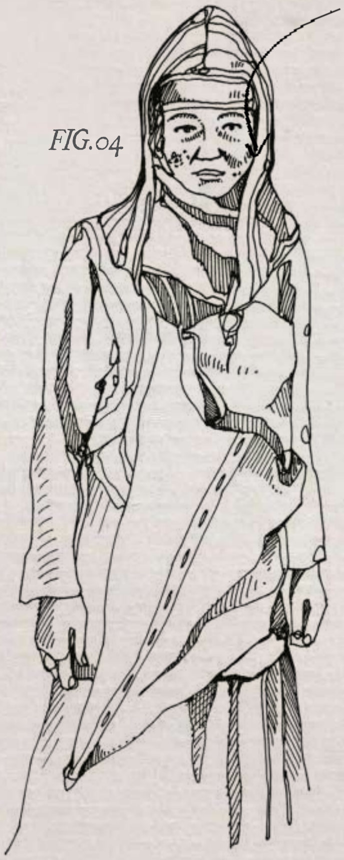


FIG.04

WHO TO AVOID

The main way to escape the plague is simply to avoid those who are afflicted with it. The sad but true reality is that these people are often very old, young or poor. Peasants have a tendency to huddle together in confined dirty spaces, causing the plague to spread rapidly among them. In fact, the plague will kill so many peasant serfs that there simply won't be enough of them left to work the land. Those few that do survive will be in a position to demand more for their labour, and this increased sense of importance will lead to the peasant revolt in 1381.

Helpful Skills

There isn't much you can do if you catch the plague, but these skills will certainly aid your survival in Medieval England

Farming

As a result of so many peasants dying, the fields have been left untilled and people face starvation. Being able to provide for yourself will ensure your belly stays full.

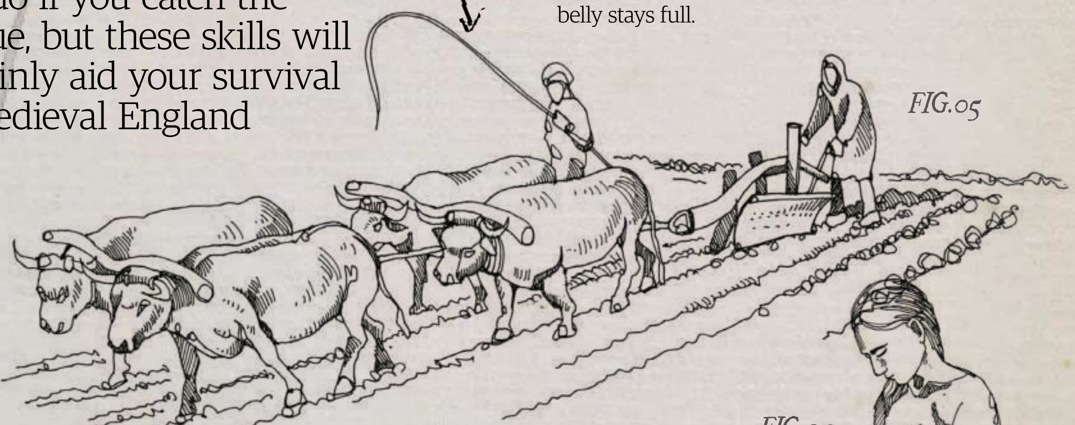


FIG.05

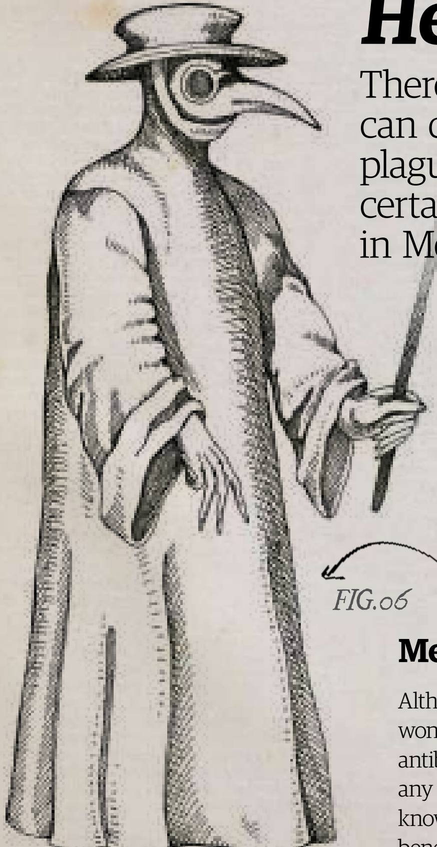


FIG.06

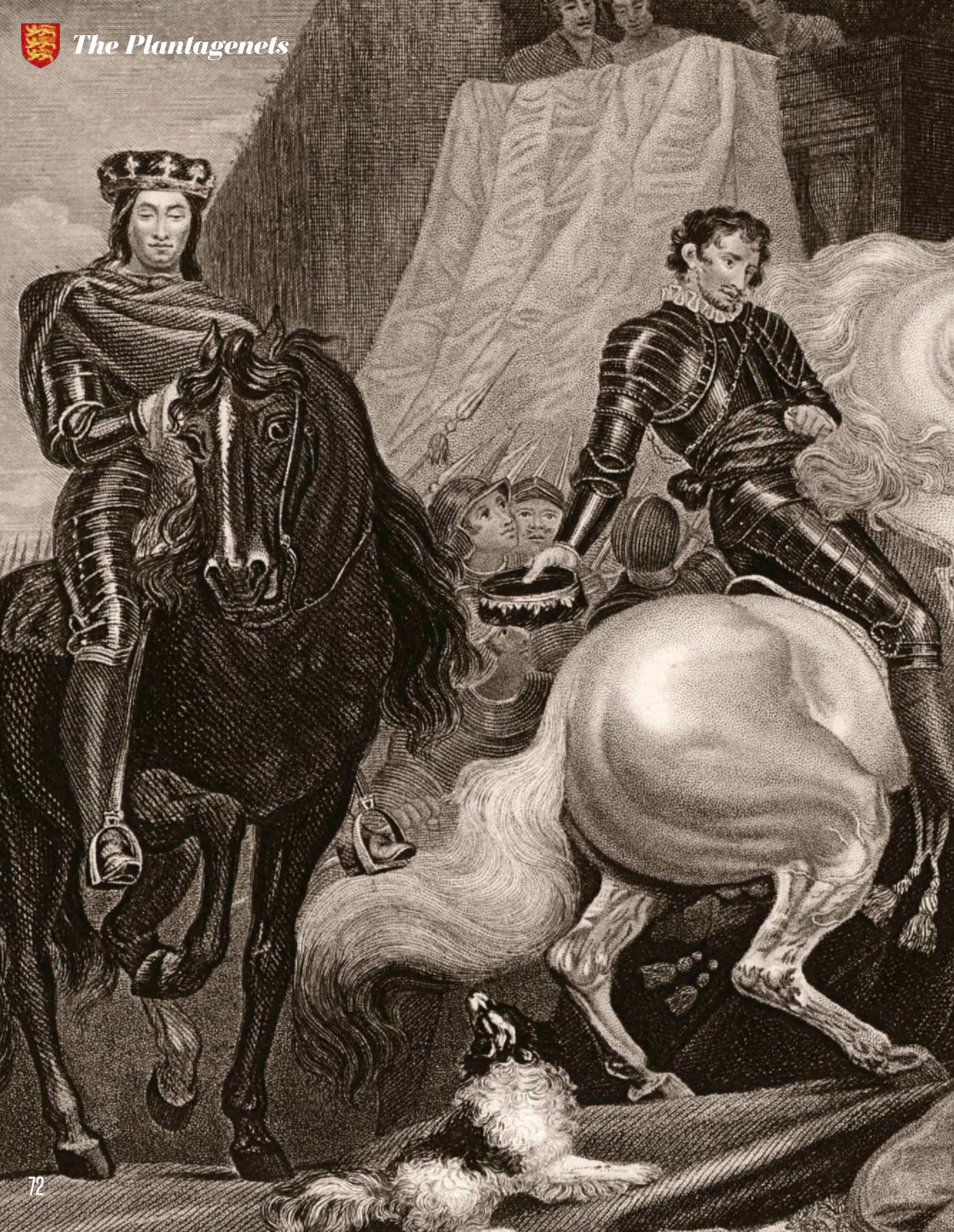
Medical

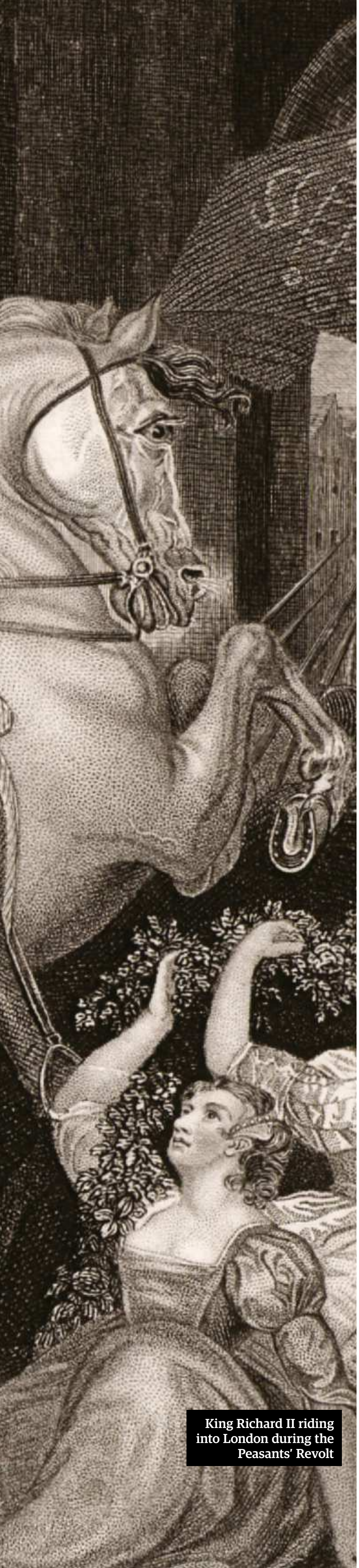
Although Medieval medicine won't allow you to develop antibiotics to fight the disease, any basic modern medical knowledge is sure to be of benefit to you and others.

FIG.07

Construction

The plague has claimed many talented craftsmen, and construction projects have been halted. Anyone with these skills is in high demand and assured a hefty salary.





King Richard II riding into London during the Peasants' Revolt

1367-1400

Richard II

The king whose thirst for revenge led to him losing his crown and his life

Soldiers barged into the house where the former chief justice of England, and one of the monarch Richard II's favourites, Robert Tresilian, had been hiding and arrested him at sword point. Tresilian had already been judged guilty of treason in absentia and his poor disguise didn't fool the soldiers - they knew they had their man. This key player in the government of Richard II, a man upon whom had been bestowed much royal patronage, was hanged on 19 February 1388. With the former chief justice executed along with Sir Nicholas Brembre, another man of the king, and others fleeing overseas in exile sentenced to a similar fate if they ever again stepped afoot on the land of their birth, it seemed as though the power base of King Richard II had been wiped out.

After this cull, the monarch - in public, at least - seemed to adopt a conciliatory position. He claimed the problems that had led to such divisions between himself and his leading nobility that caused many of his leading figures in government being executed or exiled was the result of bad advice from councillors. He would now rule with the men who his nobles had suggested as being key parts of the apparatus of the English government and peace could finally return to the country. In private, though, Richard neither forgave nor forgot.

Born in Bordeaux in 1367, Richard inherited the throne from his grandfather Edward III - since his father, Edward 'the Black Prince', had already died in 1376 - when he was just ten years old. As such, for the early parts of his reign the country was effectively run by a series of councils, but by the early 1380s the king was becoming increasingly involved. Richard would prove himself to be a capable king early on in his reign with his response to a situation that all high-born and those with power feared - a peasants' revolt. Led by Wat Tyler, the 1381 revolt was triggered by the crown's demands for a poll tax to help pay for the costly Hundred Years' War with France. With many in England struggling to feed themselves, the demand for even more money was the tipping point and a large group of dissenters actually entered London, where they looted, damaged buildings and killed anyone associated with the government.

Richard II, then aged 14, initially retreated for safety to the Tower of London, but with many of the royal forces in northern England or abroad he knew he needed to end the rebellion. As he didn't have the military strength to do this, diplomacy would have to suffice. The young king met with the rebels and agreed to their demands (which included abolishing serfdom) and the following day he spoke with Wat Tyler just outside the city's walls. However, after an

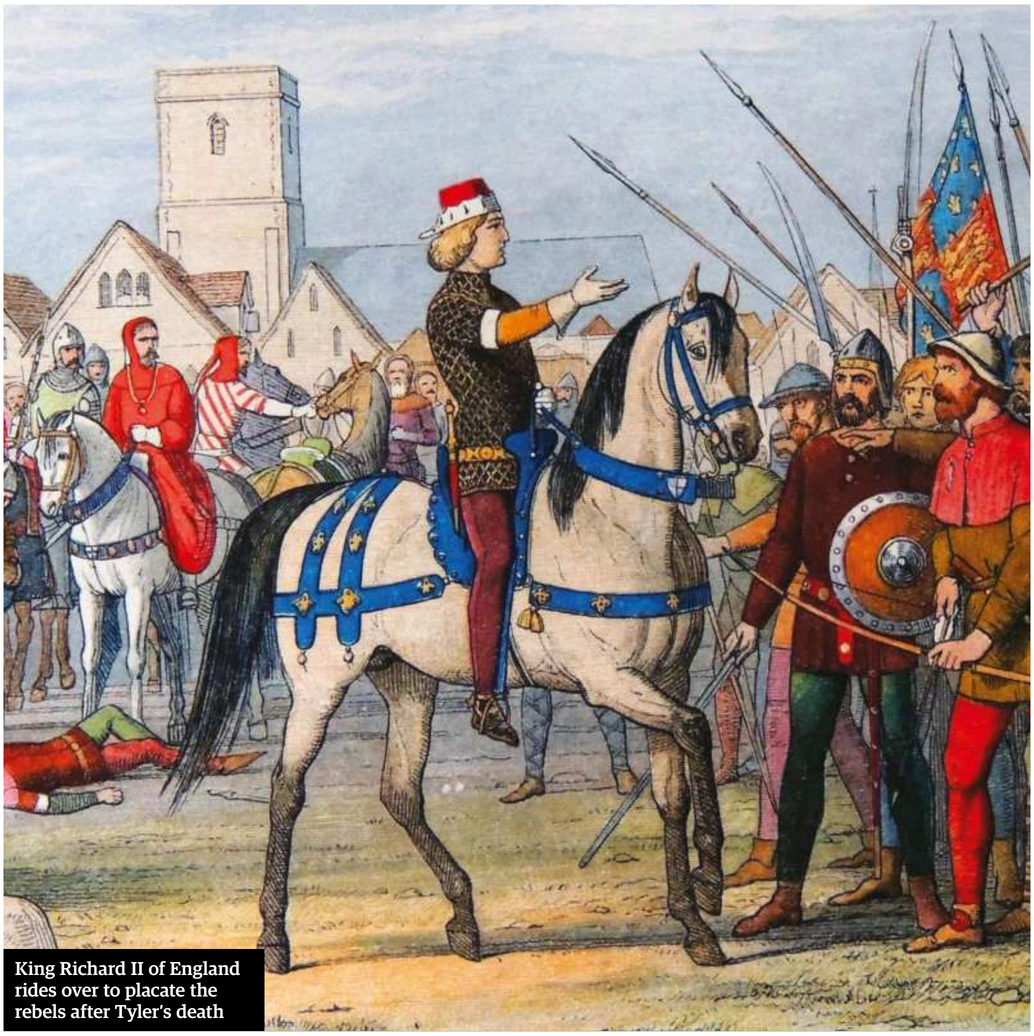
> His uncle, the duke of Gloucester, had a key role in sentencing many of Richard's favourites to death

"Rather than rule with his nobles, Richard preferred to bestow patronage and power to a small group of men, many of whom were in his royal household"

altercation broke out, Tyler was stabbed to death by the lord mayor of London, William Walworth, who feared for the safety of the king. Seeing their leader killed, the rebels seemed likely to storm the city again but Richard rode over to them and managed to defuse the situation. This gave the city's militia time to organise themselves and 'persuade' the rebel forces to disperse. Other rebellions occurred throughout the country - notably in East Anglia - and the king mobilised around 4,000 troops to restore law and order. The revolt's aims, which Richard had only agreed to in order to buy time, were studiously ignored and by the end of the year, some 1,500 rebels had been killed. The king had passed his first test and proven himself to be a brave and intelligent ruler, but in just six years' time he would lose control of his kingdom.

The crown that Richard inherited in 14th-century England, and the power that came with it, was different to that of his predecessors. The Magna Carta of 1215, signed by King John, had put into law the rights of the nobles and barons and by the late 1300s, it was no longer possible for a king to govern solely by himself with no consideration as to the thoughts and feelings of his leading citizens. Of course, the king was still the pre-eminent figure in the land and had the most power, but it was necessary that he rule with the nobles rather than over them - or at least give them the impression that he was doing so.

Richard was buried in a church in Hertfordshire but his bones were later moved to Westminster Abbey as a sign of respect

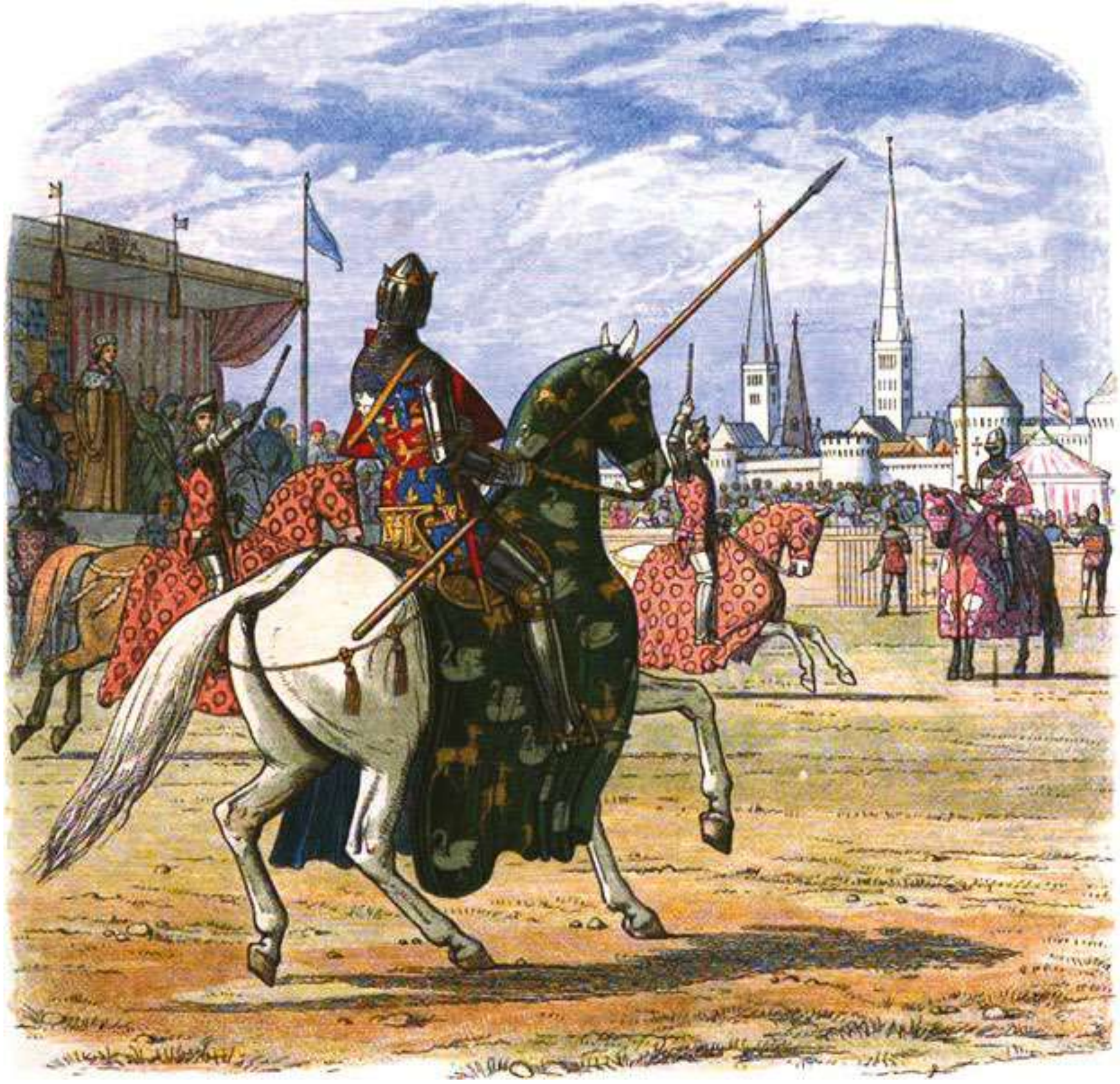

King Richard II of England rides over to placate the rebels after Tyler's death

Rather than rule with his nobles, though, Richard preferred to bestow patronage and power to a small group of men, many of whom were in his royal household. To these figures, mostly knights and minor nobility, he gave land, money and positions of influence in government. Michael de la Pole, the son of a merchant, rose to become chancellor of England, one of the most important and influential positions in the whole land, while the minor nobleman Robert de Vere became duke of Ireland. These were positions that the nobility of England, the great men with their own land and armies and ancient history, believed were theirs by right.

The king's military failures in France and Scotland only added to the bubbling resentment felt by the barons and earls at their marginalisation from power. The Hundred Years' War was a conflict that Richard had inherited but his policy of seeking peace not only robbed the nobles of potential glory and riches, but it failed. France regained territory previously held by England and even threatened invasion of the island nation. While Richard looked - unsuccessfully - for peace in France, closer to home he was no such pacifist - military campaigns in Scotland and Ireland brought little tangible rewards for the money and effort they cost.

Described as handsome, tall (when his grave was dug up he was discovered to be over six feet tall) and refined, Richard may have looked the part but his actions were leading the country steadily towards crisis. Money was raised through parliament for an army to attack Scotland to break one half of the 'Auld Alliance' between that nation and France. Richard led this force of 14,000 men himself but the Scots refused to meet in battle and the king returned having achieved little. The threat of a French invasion continued to loom ominously in the background and matters weren't helped for Richard when his uncle John of Gaunt left the country to pursue his claims to Castile in modern-day Spain. The king had an uneasy relationship with his uncle, who was one of the most powerful men in the kingdom, but John had always been loyal. In his absence, Richard had lost his most influential and respected supporter and when the chancellor, de la Pole, demanded more money from parliament, the fragile accord between the king and the leading men of the country shattered into tiny fragments. Parliament refused and insisted on the removal of de la Pole from his position - and even demanded his impeachment.

After initially dismissing parliament's request out of hand - Richard initially said he would not dismiss so much as a servant from his kitchen on Parliament's command - he soon realised that he had been outmanoeuvred and he had to give into the demands of the 'Wonderful Parliament' of 1486. He begrudgingly relieved de la Pole of his position and slinked, full of resentment, out of the capital to embark on a tour of the country. While he no doubt wanted to get far away from the men who had humiliated him, the tour also had a more practical purpose: to try to shore up his support throughout the nation and ensure that, if it came to it, plenty of nobles and barons would offer him military support.



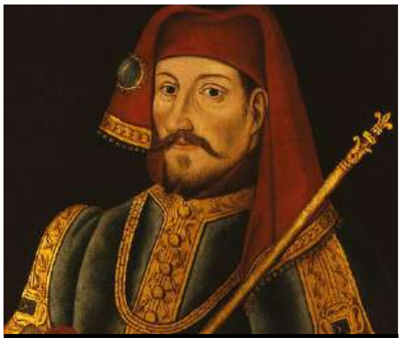
A battle between these two opposing sides did take place in 1387 but, for Richard at least, it was as an anticlimax. The king had instructed one of his favourites, Robert de Vere, to raise an army and come to his aid, but this force was met by men loyal to parliament on one of the bridges of the River Thames in what is called the Battle of Radcot Bridge. In truth, it was barely a skirmish. The men who had been summoned to Richard's aid found they would be unable to cross the bridge and had no hope of winning against the troops commanded by Henry Bolingbroke (this would not be the last time that he played a key role in Richard's life) and so their options were to surrender or flee. The 16th-century chronicler Raphael Holinshed wrote that only three people were killed at the battle and de Vere escaped before going into exile in France.

The king now had no choice if he wanted to keep his crown but to agree to parliament's demands. It was around this time that Robert Tresilian, the chief justice, was found hiding in a house in a ramshackle disguise and was taken to be hanged. Many of the king's men were either killed or exiled as his circle of favourites was ruthlessly broken up in what was called the Merciless Parliament of 1388.

Despite having his power base shattered, the authority the king of England wielded was still strong and when the steadying hand of John of Gaunt returned in 1389 and Richard declared himself old enough to rule without advisors and secured a peace treaty with France, the signs were positive. It looked as if the conflict that had disturbed the country could just be a blip in Richard's rule - but this was a mere illusion. Richard believed that God had placed him on Earth to rule and he never forgot how parliament had challenged his authority or executed and exiled his chosen men. He would bide his time before he reminded them of the supreme authority of the king.

This fragile peace was built on a house of cards and by the end of the 1390s, it had come crashing down around all of the main players. The king

> Richard was born on the religious feast day of Epiphany - thought to be a good omen, great things were expected of him



Henry Bolingbroke, the only son of John of Gaunt, returned to England in 1399 to claim the throne as Henry IV

Life in the time of Richard II

Duelling for honour

Honour among knights and noblemen was extremely important and often the way that disputes would be settled was by a duel. In 1398, a remark made by Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, was believed to have been treasonous by the duke of Norfolk so the two agreed to a duel. However, Henry was banished to France to avoid bloodshed.

Two popes

In 1378, a papal schism began that would split the Catholic Church and see two rival popes – Urban VI in Rome and Clement VII in Avignon. Both these popes were supported by different countries and the conflict was eventually resolved in 1418 with the Council of Constance, which saw the election of Pope Martin V, although tensions continued afterwards.

A peasant's life

In England during the Middle Ages, most peasants held very few rights and lived in serfdom – this is where they worked a lord's lands for the right of protection and to farm it themselves. Following the Black Death, many peasants had been paid to work on the land and saw their status improved, but they were worried these new rights would be taken away and were prepared to fight to keep them.

The Hundred Years' War

This conflict, which actually lasted 116 years, began in 1337 when Edward III declared himself king of France. Richard did not win any major battles in the conflict and the taxation required to pay for the war was one of the reasons for his unpopularity. In 1396, he signed a truce with Charles VI and married his seven-year-old daughter to forge an alliance.

Great men

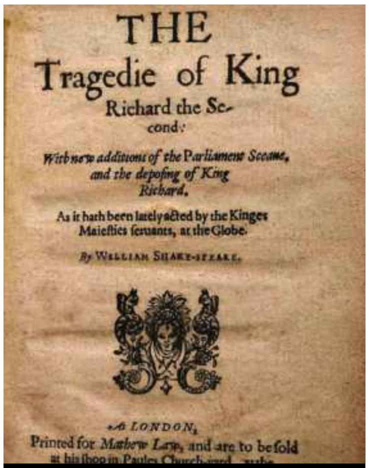
While the king was the ultimate authority, during Richard II's reign there were many great men who had considerable land, power and access to troops. Five of these men – the duke of Gloucester and earls of Arundel, Warwick, Derby and Mowbray – formed the Lords Appellant and effectively ruled England for a brief period in 1388.

William Shakespeare's Richard II

The great bard is believed to have written his play *Richard II* in 1595 when Queen Elizabeth I was the monarch of England. The work only encompasses the last two years of Richard's reign, from 1398 to 1400, and is loosely based on the actual events, with the main source believed to be Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*.

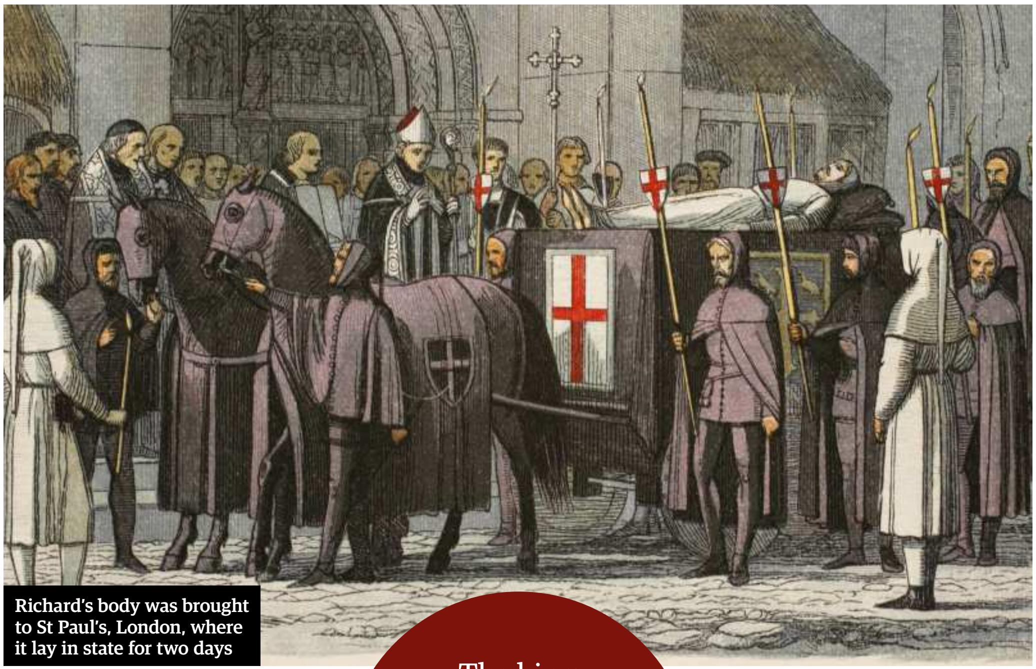
As with all Shakespeare plays, it is primarily a work of fiction and the context of when it was created is important. As it was written towards the end of Elizabeth I's life and reign, it was heavily influenced by the idea of succession and the authority of rulers. It has been claimed that the queen complained that the play was being performed numerous times in streets and houses, which would indicate that she thought that the people were already preparing for the next ruler while she was still on the throne.

Shakespeare's interpretation of Richard II is perhaps the most widely known as he is a monarch not often studied or examined. The play depicts him as a king who believes that God put him on the throne, and a man who went too far by taking land that didn't belong to him and seeking revenge on those he thought had wronged him. As such, it isn't actually too far removed from the truth.



THE
Tragedie of King
Richard the Se-
cond:
With new additions of the Parliament Sceane,
and the depoſing of King
Richard.
As it hath been lately acted by the Kinges
Maieſties ſeruants, at the Globe.
By William Shake-speare.
LONDON,
Printed for *Mathew Law*, and are to be ſold

Shakespeare's play is based loosely on the events of Richard II's reign



Richard's body was brought to St Paul's, London, where it lay in state for two days

began to rule in an increasingly tyrannical manner, abusing his power to grab land for himself and his followers. In 1397, he had three of the leading men arrested - officially it was because of a plot, although no evidence was found, but in reality this was all about revenge. The three men - the duke of Gloucester and the earls of Arundel and Warwick - had been key components of the parliament that had dared to take him on. They and others who had opposed him were executed, exiled or imprisoned as Richard II once again began to build up a power base of those whose loyalty lay exclusively with him.

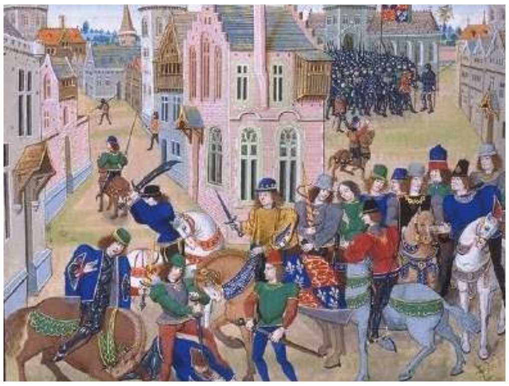
The king finally went too far when John of Gaunt, his uncle and one of his most loyal supporters, died on 3 February 1399. John's son, Henry Bolingbroke, had been banished to France, in part because Richard saw him as a threat. Henry was from the House of Lancaster and his father had controlled some of the largest landholdings in the country. However, rather than

> The king was handsome and, at over six feet tall, he was well above the average height for the time

Defining moment

Peasants' Revolt 1381

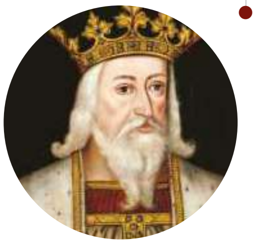
Heavy taxation, partly caused by the Hundred Years' War, and a general dissatisfaction with living standards, leads to a serious popular uprising known as the Peasants' Revolt. A large body of people led by Watt Tyler and others march on the capital and kill those associated with the government, including the archbishop of Canterbury and the treasurer of England. Richard's actions during this crisis are brave, as he rides out to meet the rebels and calm them by agreeing to their demands. When the immediate crisis has been averted, the rebels are dealt with severely and none of their requests are met.



Timeline

1367

- **Birth of a king**
  Richard is born in Bordeaux, France, to Edward - a skilled military commander known as the Black Prince - and Joan of Kent, described as "the most beautiful woman in all the realm of England".
  1367
- **Passing of the Black Prince**
  Richard's father dies after contracting an illness while on a military campaign in modern-day Spain, meaning that Richard is now the heir to the English throne.
  1376
- **A new monarch**
  Edward III dies aged 65 after a long illness that had left him inactive for a number of years. His grandson is crowned Richard II.
  1377



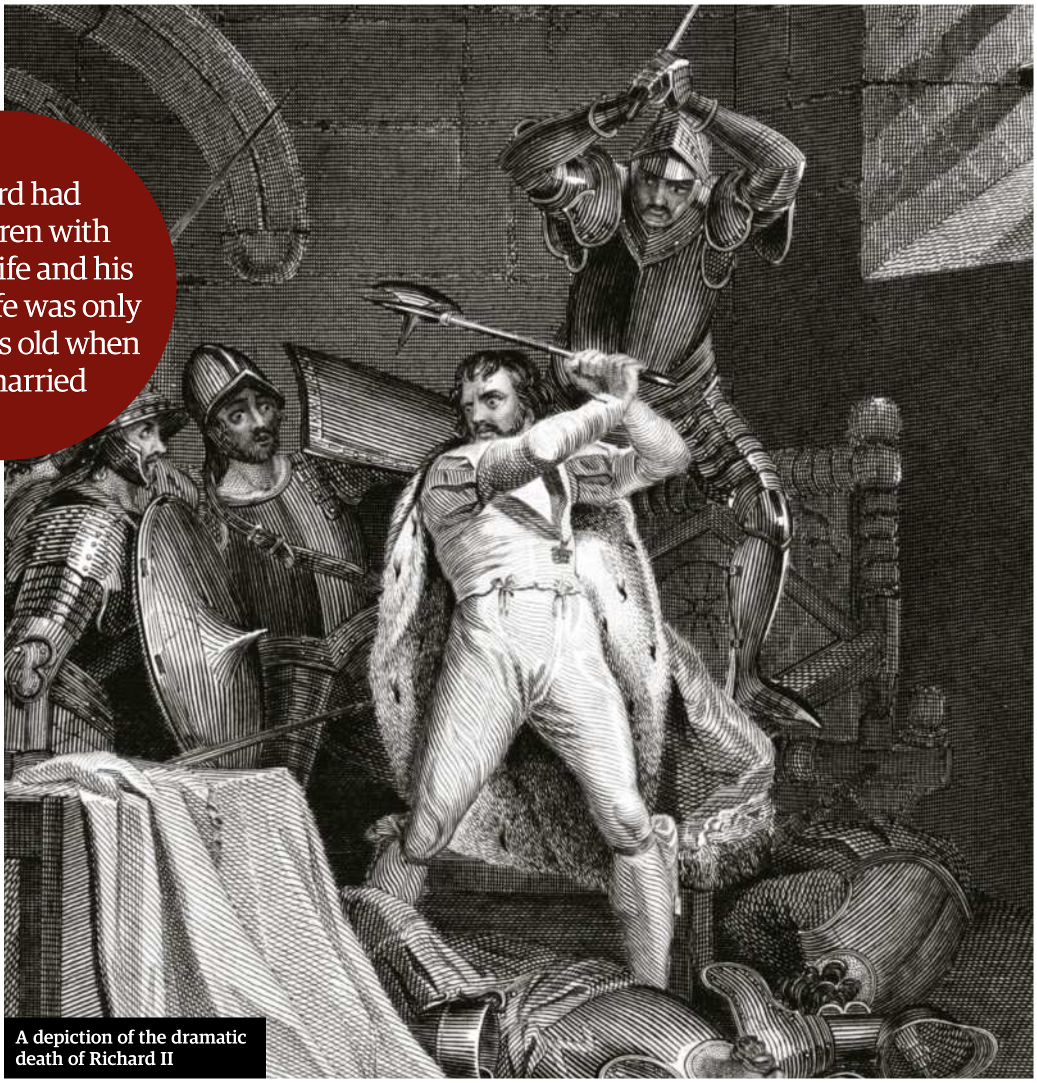
- **The king weds**
  Richard marries Anne of Bohemia, daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. The marriage is for diplomatic reasons, but Richard appears to have genuine affection for his wife.
  1382
- **Wonderful Parliament**
  Not wonderful for Richard, parliament has grown tired of the king giving patronage to his own men and the high levels of taxation and so refuses a request from the chancellor to levy more money.
  1386
- **Tour of the country**
  Richard leaves London to travel the country to shore up his support after his defeat to parliament and to ensure that, if required, the nobles would provide him with military support.
  1387

let Henry return to England and inherit what was his, Richard decided to seize the land for himself and his supporters. This showed to the nobility of England that if the king would do this to such a powerful family then none of them were truly safe. Henry returned to England with a small force while Richard and most of his knights were in Ireland and, while at first Henry insisted that he was only interested in reclaiming his birthright, it soon became clear that Richard had little support and Henry's campaign was gathering momentum. When the king landed in Wales in July, it was clear his kingdom had been lost - neither the nobles nor the people would fight for him. Richard met with Henry and promised to abdicate if his life was spared. He was soon transported to the Tower of London and Henry Bolingbroke was crowned Henry IV on 13 October 1399. The country had a new king.

The man who had once been ruler but had thrown it all away by pursuing vengeance was transported to Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire and placed under close guard. Richard may well have eventually been allowed to live out the rest of his days in exile but when a plot to reinstate him to the throne by his closest supporters was discovered, it was clear he was too dangerous to be left alive.

Historians disagree on the exact nature of his death, with opinion being divided as to whether he was starved to death or murdered in his cell, but it is thought that he died in early 1400. Richard had believed in the ultimate authority of the king, but this very belief led to him eking out his final days in a dank, dark cell far away from the throne.

> Richard had no children with his first wife and his second wife was only seven years old when they married



A depiction of the dramatic death of Richard II

Defining moment

Battle and defeat 1387

All trust between Parliament and Richard has now evaporated and so the king instructs Robert de Vere to raise troops and march to London. This small force is met on one of the bridges crossing the River Thames by some men commanded by Henry Bolingbroke, who will later become Henry IV. When the force loyal to the king sees that they will not be able to cross the bridge, most of them refuse to fight. De Vere manages to escape to France but the defeat for Richard leads to control of the county briefly passing to five great magnates known as the Lords Appellant, as well as the Merciless Parliament where many of the king's key men are killed or exiled.

Defining moment

Losing a kingdom 1399

After the death of John of Gaunt, one of the country's most powerful landowners, Richard takes the estate of the duchy of Lancaster. Following his actions in the Revenge Parliament, many of the nobles are wary of the king and they see that if he can take the land of one of the country's most prestigious estates then the same thing could happen to them. John of Gaunt's son Henry Bolingbroke has previously been in France but he returns with a small force to claim what is rightfully his. Henry receives support from other nobles and, with the king and most of his knights in Ireland, is able to claim the crown for himself.

1400

A new dawn?
Now aged 21, Richard declares himself ready to govern in his own right without advisors and blames the problems on the past in the bad advice he had been given. A fragile domestic peace emerges.
1389

Peace with France
The English king meets with Charles VI of France and they agree to a 28-year truce. Anne, Richard's first wife, died in 1394 and as part of the accord he marries Charles' daughter Isabella.
1396

Revenge Parliament
Proving that he has not forgotten parliament's actions in the Wonderful and Merciless Parliaments, Richard exiles and murders many leading nobles who had previously opposed him. Their lands and wealth go to the king and his leading men.
1397

Surrender
Richard gives himself up while staying in Flint Castle in Wales and is imprisoned at the Tower of London on 1 September. Henry Bolingbroke is declared king and the fourth of his name.
1399

Ignominious end
Richard is taken to Pontefract Castle as a prisoner but when a plot by his supporters to kill Henry and restore him to the throne is uncovered, it's clear he is too much of a threat. There is still debate as to the exact manner and date of Richard's death.
1400

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THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER & YORK

80 Henry IV
The House of Lancaster's first monarch emerged from the shadows to rule the country

86 Henry V
Meet the warrior king who almost achieved the goal of ruling over France

88 A Clash of Kings at Agincourt
Uncover the truth behind King Henry V's stunning victory in 1415

92 John, Duke of Bedford
Henry V's brother would meet his match in a French peasant girl named Joan of Arc

92

88

LANCASTER

Philippa of Hainault
c.1310-69

Edward III
1312-77

Joan of Kent
1328-85

Edward the Black Prince
1330-1376

Blanche of Derby
1345-68

John of Gaunt
1340-99

Katherine Swynford
1350-1403

Richard II
1367-1400

Mary de Bohen
1368-94

Henry IV
1367-1413

Owen Tudor
1392-1461

Catherine of Valois
1401-37

Henry V
1386-1422

Thomas, Duke of Clarence
1388-1421

Jacquetta of Luxembourg
1415-72

John, Duke of Bedford
1389-1435

Margaret of Beaufort
1443-1509

Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond
1430-56

Henry VI
1421-71

Margaret of Anjou
1430-1482

Edward of Westminster
1453-71

Isabella of Castile
1355-93

Edmund of Langley
1341-1402

86

YORK

Edward of Norwich
1373-1415

Anne Mortimer
1390-1411

Richard, Earl of Cambridge
1375-1415

Cecily Neville
1415-95

Richard, Duke of York
1411-60

Elizabeth Woodville
1437-92

Edward IV
1422-83

Isabel Neville
1451-76

George, Duke of Clarence
1449-78

Anne Neville
1456-85

Richard III
1452-85

Elizabeth of York
1466-1503

Edward V
1470-83

Richard of Shrewsbury
1473-83

Edward of Middleham
1473-84

1367-1413

Henry IV

The usurping cousin who established the House of Lancaster, Henry was a complex character who left his own mark on the English monarchy

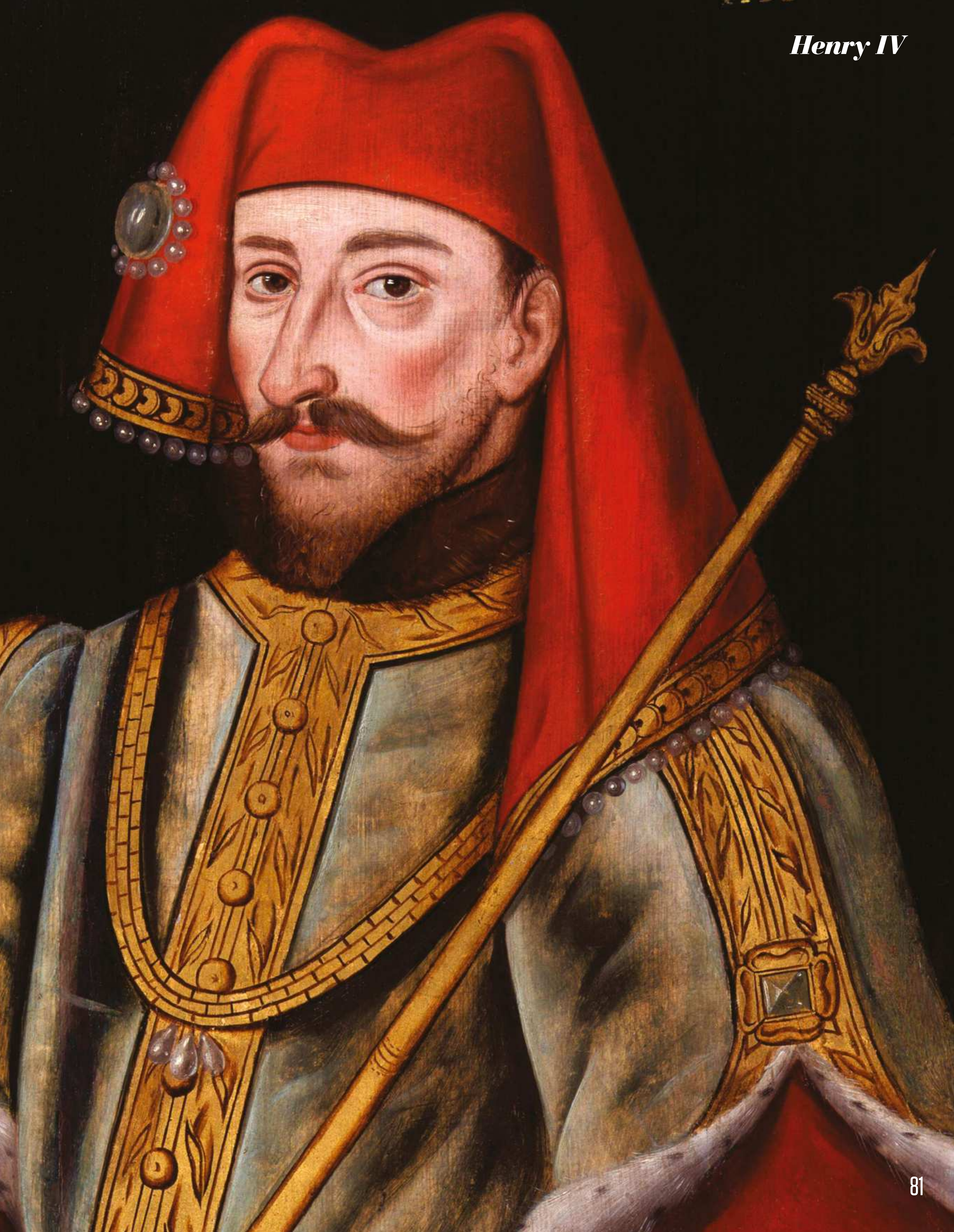
Written by June Woolerton

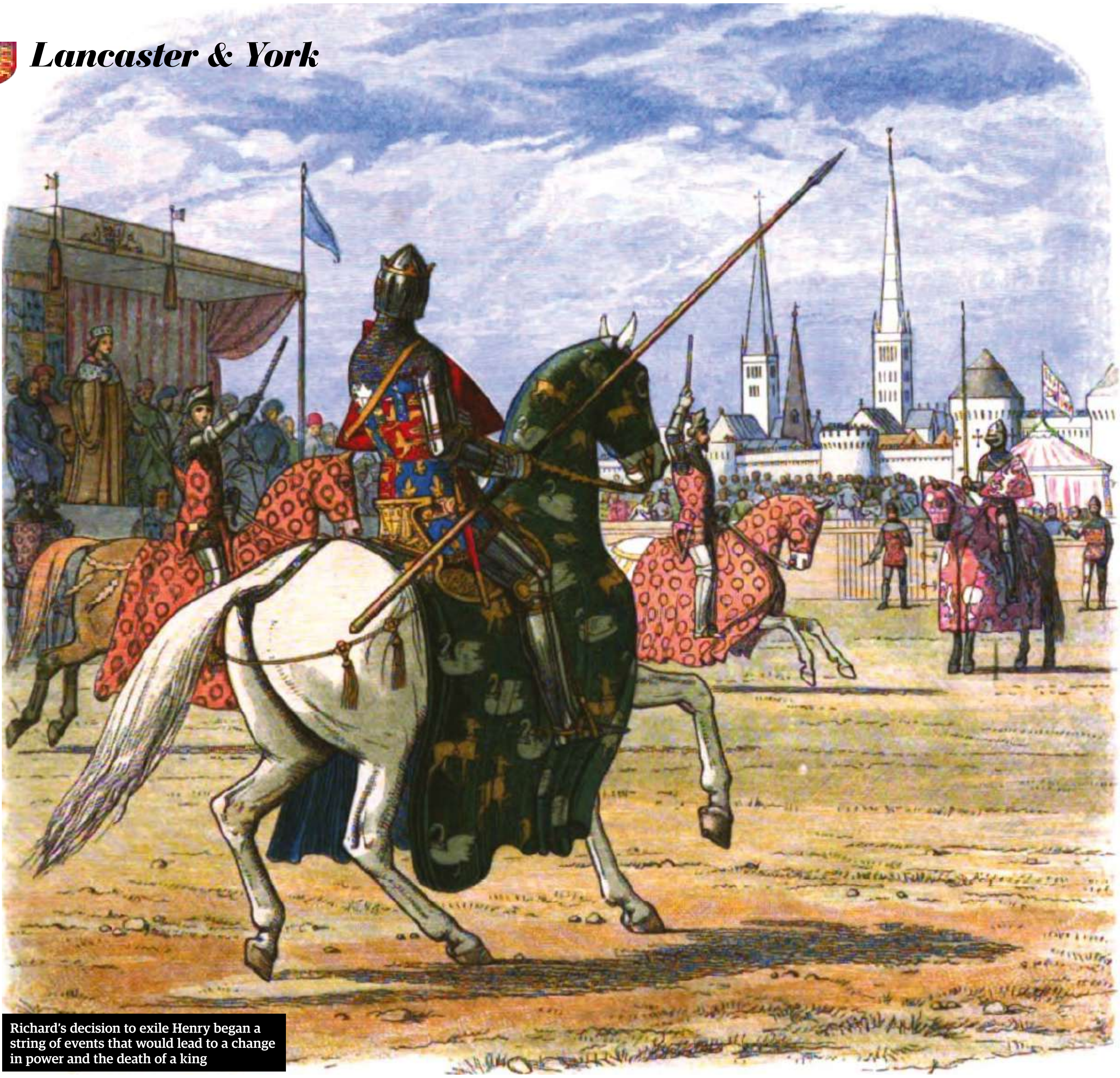
Henry IV was a king who emerged from the shadows. For most of his early life, he was outshone by his father, John of Gaunt, who made no secret of his own ambitions to rule. In his final years, Henry was eclipsed by the growing brilliance of his son and heir who would later dominate the history of the House of Lancaster as Henry V. And yet it was Henry IV who won the crown against the odds and who saw down every attempt to snatch it away from him.

Henry had little expectation of becoming king when he was born at Bolingbroke Castle, Lincolnshire, on 15 April 1367, despite his parents being two of the most important people in England. John of Gaunt was the third surviving son of King Edward III and wielded considerable political power. He was also one of the wealthiest people in Europe. His wife, Blanche, had inherited vast estates from her father Henry, Duke of Lancaster, whose title was granted to John by Edward III. But ahead of John in the succession were older brothers and nephews with much stronger claims to the throne.

Henry's early years were far from easy. His mother died in September 1368, when he was just 18 months old, while his father was away fighting in Europe. He didn't join John of Gaunt's household until 1371 but by the time he arrived at the luxurious Savoy Palace in London, he had a new stepmother, Constance of Castile. His father was also beginning a relationship with governess Katherine Swynford. As he received the education reserved for high-born boys, including learning to read, write, joust and fight, Henry was surrounded by an increasing number of half-brothers and sisters. However, he remained the only legitimate son of John of Gaunt, who was putting pressure on Edward III to decree the crown could only pass to his male descendants.

The old king agreed just before his death in 1377. By then, several of those ahead of John and Henry in the line of succession were also dead. The new king was Edward III's ten-year-old grandson, Richard II, and Henry saw John's influence increase in the early years of his cousin's reign. But he was also given an early lesson in the dangers of kingship. When the Peasant's Revolt broke out in 1381, Henry was at the Tower of London and only narrowly escaped with his life, emerging to find anger against his father had led to the destruction of the Savoy Palace. But within five years, Henry himself was trying to control government.





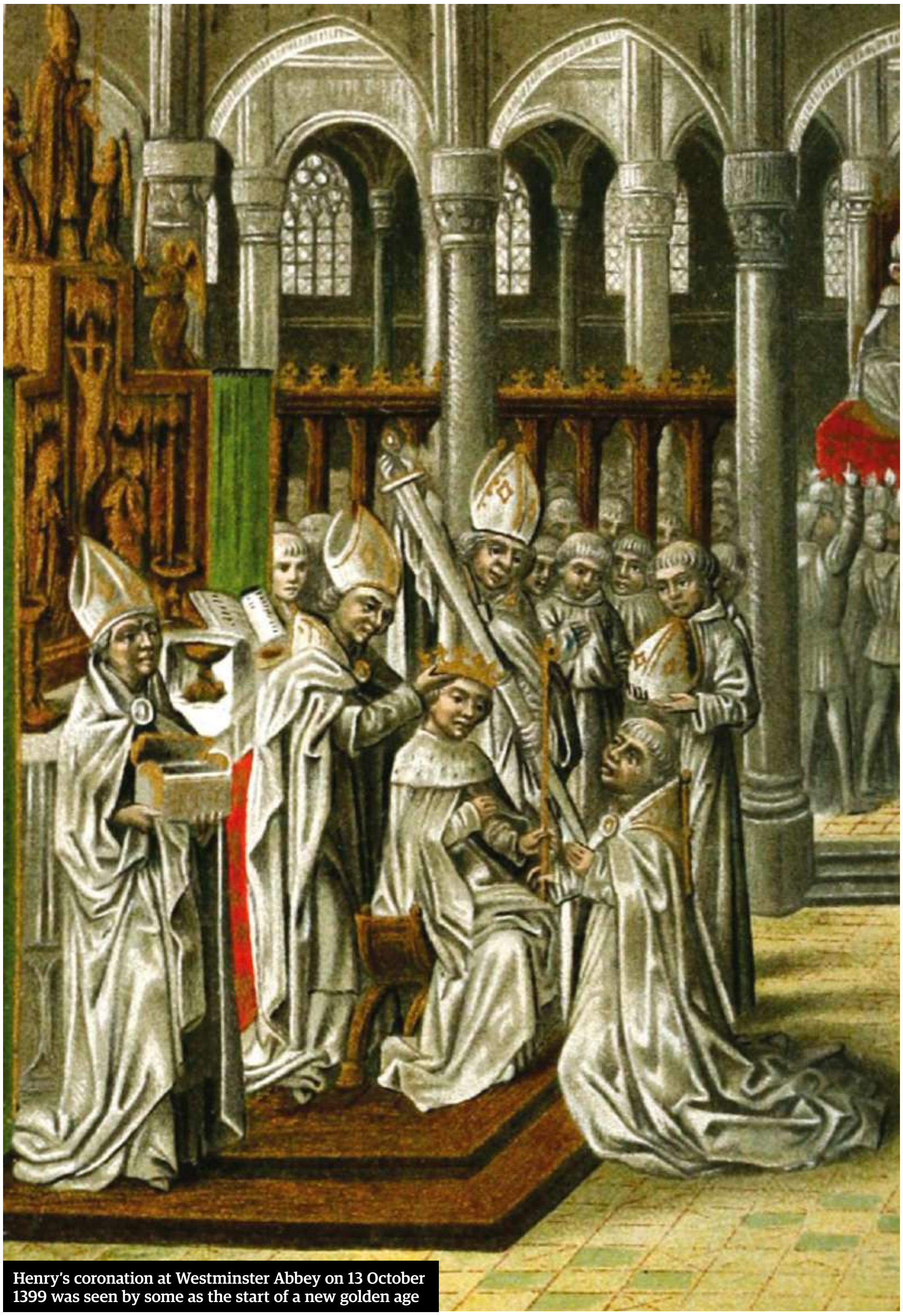
Richard's decision to exile Henry began a string of events that would lead to a change in power and the death of a king

“Henry's early years were far from easy. His mother died in September 1368, when he was just 18 months old”

In 1386, with John of Gaunt overseas, Henry and four others demanded the removal of the king's advisers. Known as Lords Appellant, they set up a commission to govern England and when Richard fought back, his main advisers were executed for treason. However, the new government soon lost popularity and Richard re-established his power. Henry headed overseas. It was a politically expedient move but it also allowed the deeply religious Henry to join a crusade. He took part in the Siege of Vilnius, in 1390, part of the Teutonic Knights campaign to bring Christianity to Lithuania. He also visited Jerusalem, vowing to return one day on crusade.

He came home to a growing family. Henry had married heiress Mary de Bohun in 1380 but despite this being a traditional, arranged marriage, the couple were devoted to one another. They had a large family and Henry took every chance he could, to be at home with his wife and children. Soon after his return from Jerusalem, Mary became pregnant again. But she died giving birth to their daughter, Philippa, leaving Henry heartbroken. Not long afterward, King Richard lost his wife, Anne, and his behaviour became more erratic. By 1397, his rule was increasingly despotic and Richard began to seek out the Appellants who had opposed him a decade earlier. Henry was exiled in 1398 and when John of Gaunt died in 1399, Richard prevented his title and wealth passing to his son.

Now in France, Henry joined forces with the former archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, who had been sent into exile, too. When Richard headed to Ireland on military campaign, Henry sailed for home, ostensibly to reclaim his title. He came ashore in Ravenspur in early July 1399 with just a small force, and made extravagant oaths in front of some of the most important people in the land that he would make no attempt to seize the throne. He began a military campaign, saying he wanted to restore order to the royal household, and he met little resistance. Soon, poets were hailing



Henry's coronation at Westminster Abbey on 13 October 1399 was seen by some as the start of a new golden age

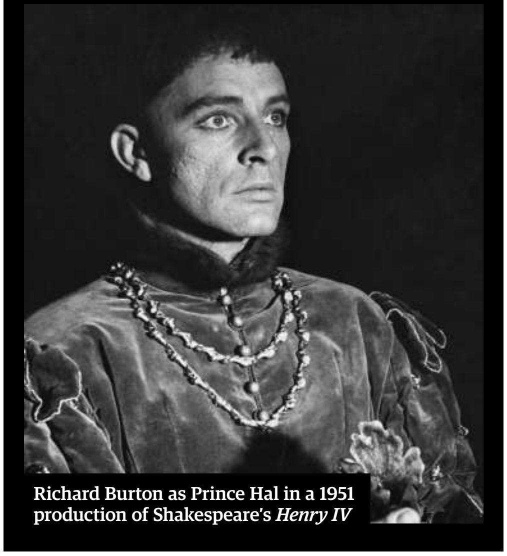
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown

Henry IV inspired two of Shakespeare's plays but is far from their star

He has one of the most famous of all Shakespeare's lines and *Henry IV, Parts One* and *Two*, are among the Bard's most celebrated works. However, Henry lurks in the shadows in the plays that bear his name. In the plays, the conflicted Henry is overshadowed by some of Shakespeare's greatest characters and yet this complex portrayal has influenced history's view of him for centuries.

The two plays were written at the end of the 16th century. Shakespeare portrayed Henry's usurpation in his 1595 work, *Richard II. Henry IV, Part One* deals with the dramatic rebellions which marked his early reign while *Part Two* focuses more on human nature and is sometimes seen as the weaker play. In both, Henry is constantly concerned about the behaviour of his heir, Hal, who starts to eclipse his father with his transformation from party prince to king in waiting.

But the plays are best known for introducing one of Shakespeare's best loved creations. The wit and cunning of Falstaff thrilled audiences from the first performances, despite the controversy surrounding the character. Originally called Oldcastle, Shakespeare later added an epilogue to dispute that the creation was based on a Lollard martyr of the same name. Falstaff, whose deteriorating health in *Part Two* was seen to follow the pattern of king's own demise, is most definitely the star of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.



Richard Burton as Prince Hal in a 1951 production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*

him as a hero who would save the country. By the time Richard returned from Ireland, Henry had the upper hand.

The king fled into Wales before emerging for negotiations that quickly led to his surrender. Richard was in the Tower of London when Parliament formally deposed him and made Henry king. Henry showed his PR prowess by arranging his coronation for 13 October, the feast day of England's saintly king, Edward the Confessor. But within weeks, his own rule was under threat.

The decision by some of Richard's disgruntled supporters to attack the new king at an Epiphany celebration came to nothing when their plot was discovered and quickly thwarted. But it revealed two things to Henry. First, he now knew that Richard was still a threat and by February 1400, the former king was dead. Second, Henry had been given an indication that his rule would never be universally accepted.

Despite the threats, Henry began to set out his vision as a ruler. He took inspiration from the now idealised reign of his grandfather, Edward III, and even set up a new order of chivalry. He immediately reversed some of Richard II's later actions that ultimately led to a weakening of monarchical power, but Henry's vision was to rule with the support of his great lords. He won Church backing with one of the first acts of his reign. De heretico comburendo, passed in 1401, allowed heretics to be burned at the stake at a time when the Lollards were challenging orthodox beliefs, including transubstantiation.

The disfigured monarch

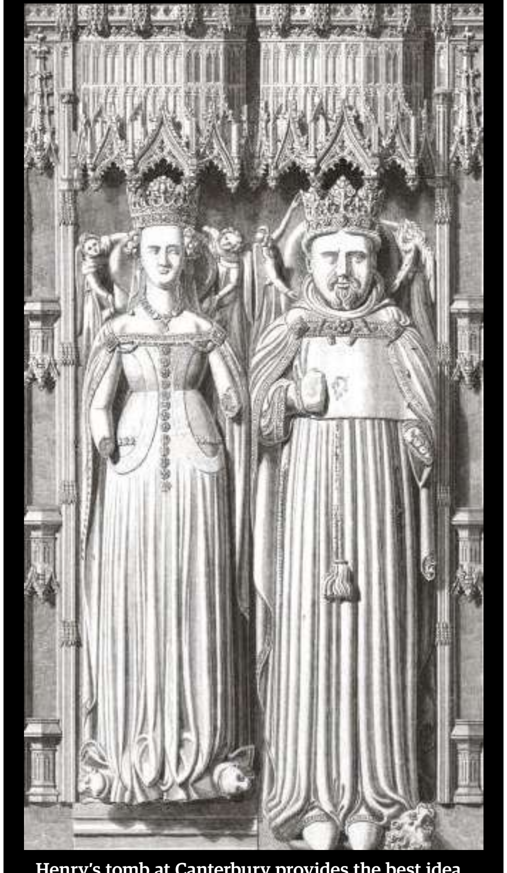
Handsome and athletic in his youth, Henry suffered mysterious illnesses that left him scarred and prematurely old

Just hours after shocking England by ordering the execution of Archbishop Richard le Scrope, Henry IV was heard screaming in pain. He complained that his skin was burning and one account suggests the king's face was covered in red pustules. His health and appearance were never the same again.

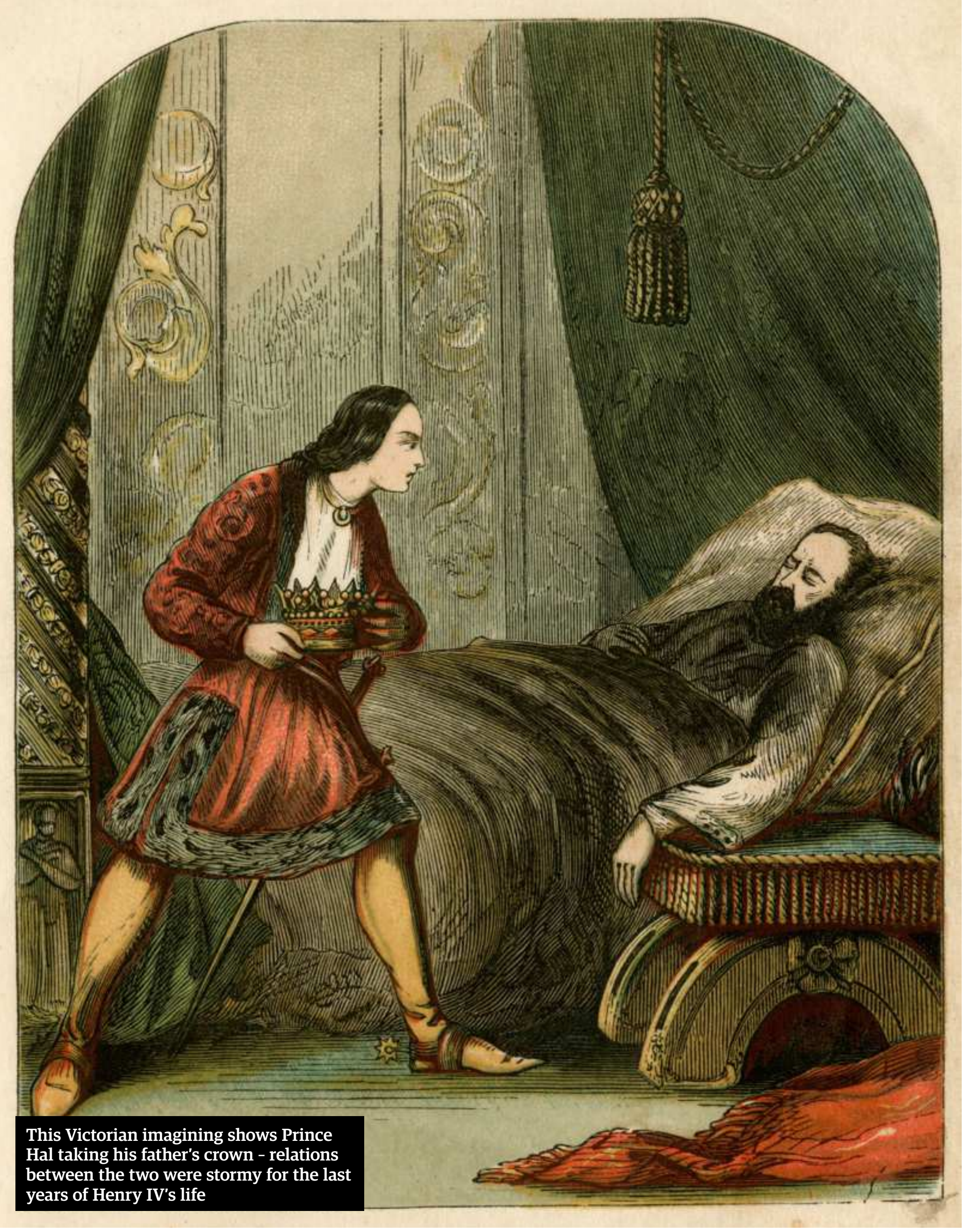
Contemporaries quickly decided the king had been punished with leprosy for his actions. Later historians have suggested Henry had a stroke or a breakdown. Whatever the cause, the illness marked a turning point and the start of a physical deterioration that couldn't be ignored.

The chronicler Adam Usk, who was close to Henry and his court described the king as suffering "festering of the flesh" and problems with his eyes. Henry's lower body began to wither and he was said to be "all sinews and bones" while others wrote of his "innards laid open and visible". He also seems to have lost most of his hair – the most realistic image of him comes from his tomb effigy which shows the king as bald even though he was just 45 when he died.

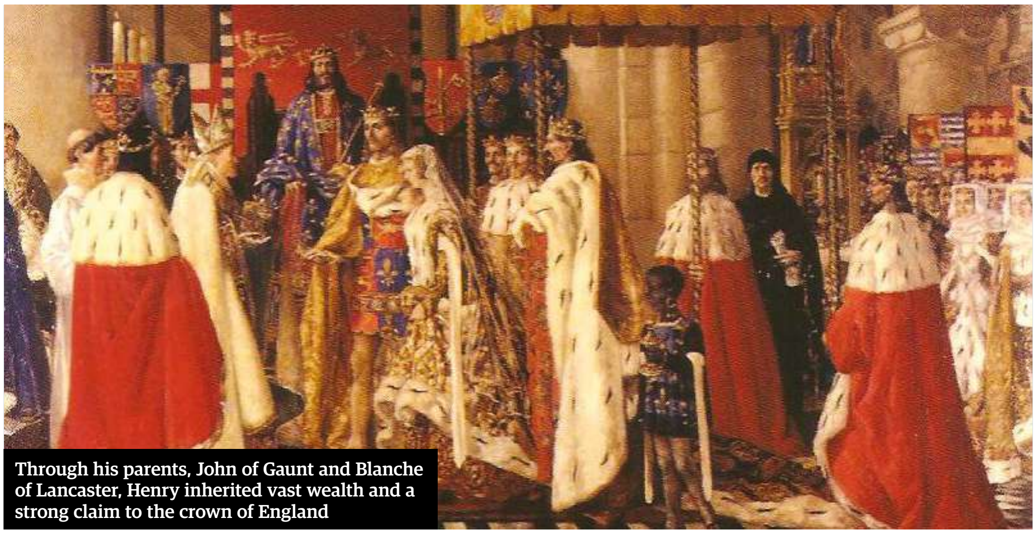
Henry had suffered health problems for much of his life but the ongoing illnesses of the last half of his reign remain largely unexplained. However, there is little doubt that they left the once handsome knight with lasting and painful physical scars.



Henry's tomb at Canterbury provides the best idea of how he might have looked in life but it omits the scars that covered the king



This Victorian imagining shows Prince Hal taking his father's crown - relations between the two were stormy for the last years of Henry IV's life



Through his parents, John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, Henry inherited vast wealth and a strong claim to the crown of England

While some of his foreign policy focused on diplomacy, with Henry becoming the only English king ever to welcome a Byzantine emperor to his land, other parts were more belligerent. One of his first moves as king was to prepare an army to march on Scotland where he aimed to prove his strength. When this military expedition petered out, with little to show except for a large bill, Henry experienced another reality of royal rule. He had promised to only raise taxes in times of war and facing parliament the following year, he had to make concessions.

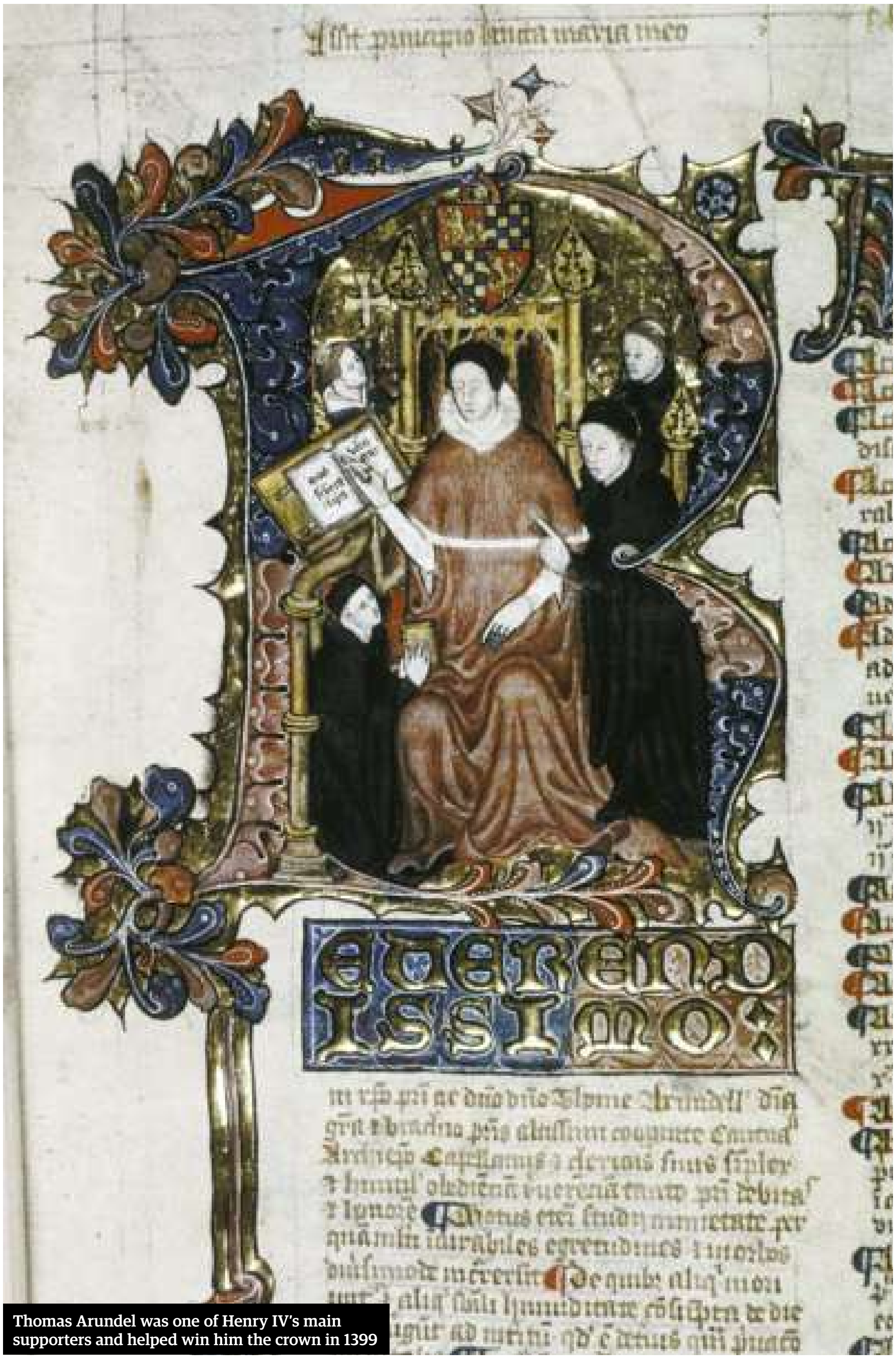
Between 1401 and 1406, parliament would wring more control from Henry over who he appointed and how he spent his money. But they also found a determined and hard working king who took an active role in all parts of his rule, reading the majority of petitions laid before the government.

"A well-known prophecy stated Henry would die in Jerusalem"

Henry also fell in love again. The king married Joanna of Navarre, widow of the duke of Brittany, in 1403, and while her links helped in his ongoing disputes with the French, the new queen was doted on by her husband and returned his devotion in equal measure.

But revolt was never far away. He faced growing dissent in Wales where the charismatic Owain Glyndwr quickly took command of parts of Wales. Some of Henry's most loyal supporters also turned on him. The Percy family had helped him win power, but when he refused to hand over money and land he had promised them, they rebelled. Henry defeated them at the Battle of Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403 and shocked many into submission in 1405 when he executed the archbishop of York, Richard le Scrope, for his part in another planned Percy revolt. The rebellion was finally ended with Henry IV's comprehensive victory at the Battle of Branham Moor in 1408. The following year his son and heir, Prince Henry, began to turn the tide decisively against Glyndwr, who was driven into the Welsh mountains.

But the prince would soon be another stumbling block in Henry's rule. The king suffered increasing bouts of ill health from 1405 onward and his old friend, Thomas Arundel, started taking on more power, serving as Lord Chancellor. As a result, Prince Henry often found himself in dispute with his father and his great adviser, where power swung repeatedly between the two sides until the heir was ultimately dismissed from the Royal Council in 1411.



Thomas Arundel was one of Henry IV's main supporters and helped win him the crown in 1399

By then, Henry was just 44 years old, but very ill. A well-known prophecy stated he would die in Jerusalem, but while plans were made in 1412 for the king to go on crusade, Henry knew better than most that they would never happen. In March 1413, while in London for Parliament, he fell gravely ill and was carried into the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey. He died there on 20 March 1413 and was buried at Canterbury Cathedral.

Henry IV's reign saw a consolidation of parliamentary power and a strengthening of clerical authority at a time when new ideas were challenging long held beliefs. Yet Henry remains best remembered as a usurper. His grab for power set a pattern which would see royal cousins challenge each other for the crown for decades more to come yet the man who started it all remains an enigma.

©Getty

c.1387-1422

Henry V

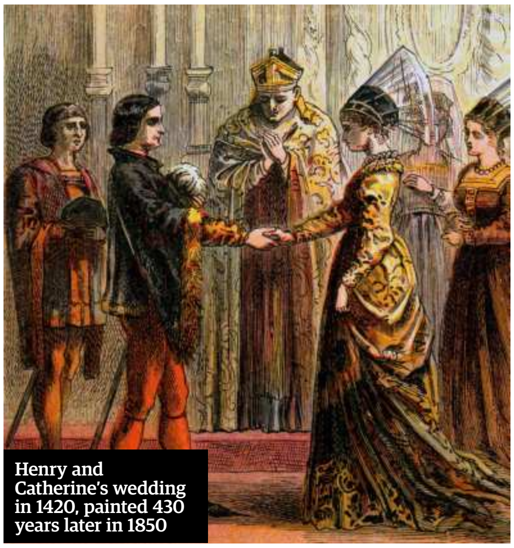
The king who came so close to getting it all

In a twist of irony, one of England's most loved and celebrated kings wasn't meant to rule. When the future Henry V was born in 1386 or 1387, King Richard II was on the throne. When Henry was a young boy, Richard held him hostage to ensure the good behaviour of his father. Unfortunately, Henry's father wasn't much inclined to behave well and usurped the English throne while the monarch was in Ireland in 1399, becoming Henry IV and making his son the Prince of Wales. Luckily for young Henry, Richard had grown fond of him and didn't cause him any harm.

The prince displayed military skill from an early age and fought bravely at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, even receiving an arrow to the skull that found its mark just low enough that he wasn't blinded or killed. In fact, his leadership was a major factor in his side's victory. He also proved an able political leader, carrying out the duties of the high sheriff of Cornwall from 1400 to 1404.

Henry struggled to get on with his father as he neared the end of his days. While the king was ill, Henry dominated the privy council and tensions were caused when father and son favoured different warring factions in France in the early 1410s. The king sided with the Armagnacs while the prince felt the Burgundians were in the right.

After his father's death, Henry came to the throne as Henry V in 1413. He spent the first portion of his reign suppressing a rebellion before it was announced to parliament on 9 April 1413 that he was going to reignite war with France in a bid to reclaim territory that had previously been held by English kings. His war would bring in 1415.


Henry and Catherine's wedding in 1420, painted 430 years later in 1850

Landing in France in August, Henry's forces soon laid siege to the fortress at Harfleur, which Henry took at a loss of one-third of his army to dysentery, forcing him to abandon plans to march on Paris. This success was closely followed by the Battle of Agincourt, a crushing victory for England and its king. The sovereign returned home briefly after his triumph and was welcomed by Londoners hailing him as a hero.

In 1417, he returned to France, this time taking Normandy and Caen by storm. Rouen followed suit in 1419 (the same year in which Henry formed an alliance with the duke of Burgundy) after a lengthy siege, but this event revealed another side to the monarch, who was supposed to epitomise the chivalric Medieval knight. As the fighting intensified, 12,000 residents of Rouen found themselves stuck in the no-man's-land between the city walls and the English forces, a number of which were old or infirm. Henry ruthlessly ordered that they be left to starve.

It was the Treaty of Troyes, signed in 1420, that would be Henry's crowning glory. He was named as next in line to the French throne (the French dauphin was effectively disinherited) and his heirs would follow him. As a bonus, he was betrothed to Catherine of Valois, the daughter of Charles VI and his queen Isabeau.

Henry returned to England in 1420, marrying Catherine before the couple embarked on a royal progress around the country. Everywhere he went, the people's sentiments were the same: don't continue the Hundred Years' War. It had in fact been Henry's plan to end hostilities until the French dauphin began stirring up resistance.

Henry made his way back across the Channel in 1421 in a bid to salvage something from the wreckage of England's defeat in the Battle of Baugé. He laid

The wooden effigy on King Henry V's tomb in Westminster Abbey

A snowy disposition

When crowning a king, everyone looks out for omens

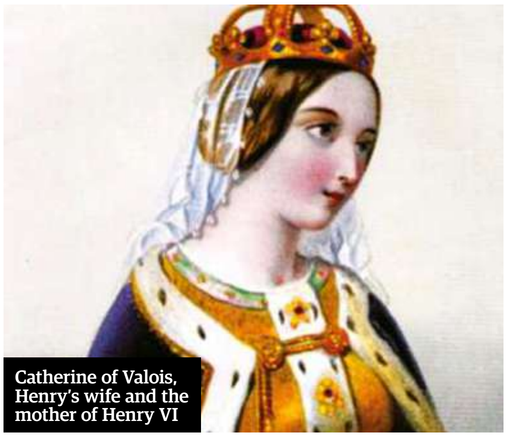
On 9 April 1413, Henry made his way to Westminster Abbey for his official coronation. In an unseasonable turn of weather, snow began to fall across London and Thomas Walsingham, the resident chronicler at St Alban's Abbey just before Henry's death, recalled two interpretations that spread through the country. The prevailing theory was that England was doomed. The cold weather meant that the new king would be a cold-hearted sovereign and he would rule his subjects with a harsh mentality and an iron fist. On the other hand, there were some who looked on the bright side, taking the view that the snow meant vice would be frozen and new virtues would begin to flourish in the coming spring. However, it is possible that Walsingham made all of this up. Writing just before the king's death, there is a chance that he was attacking the monarch who had started as a restorative and military force but who he now viewed as increasingly arbitrary and greedy.

“Henry’s most pressing issue was the security of his two kingdoms”

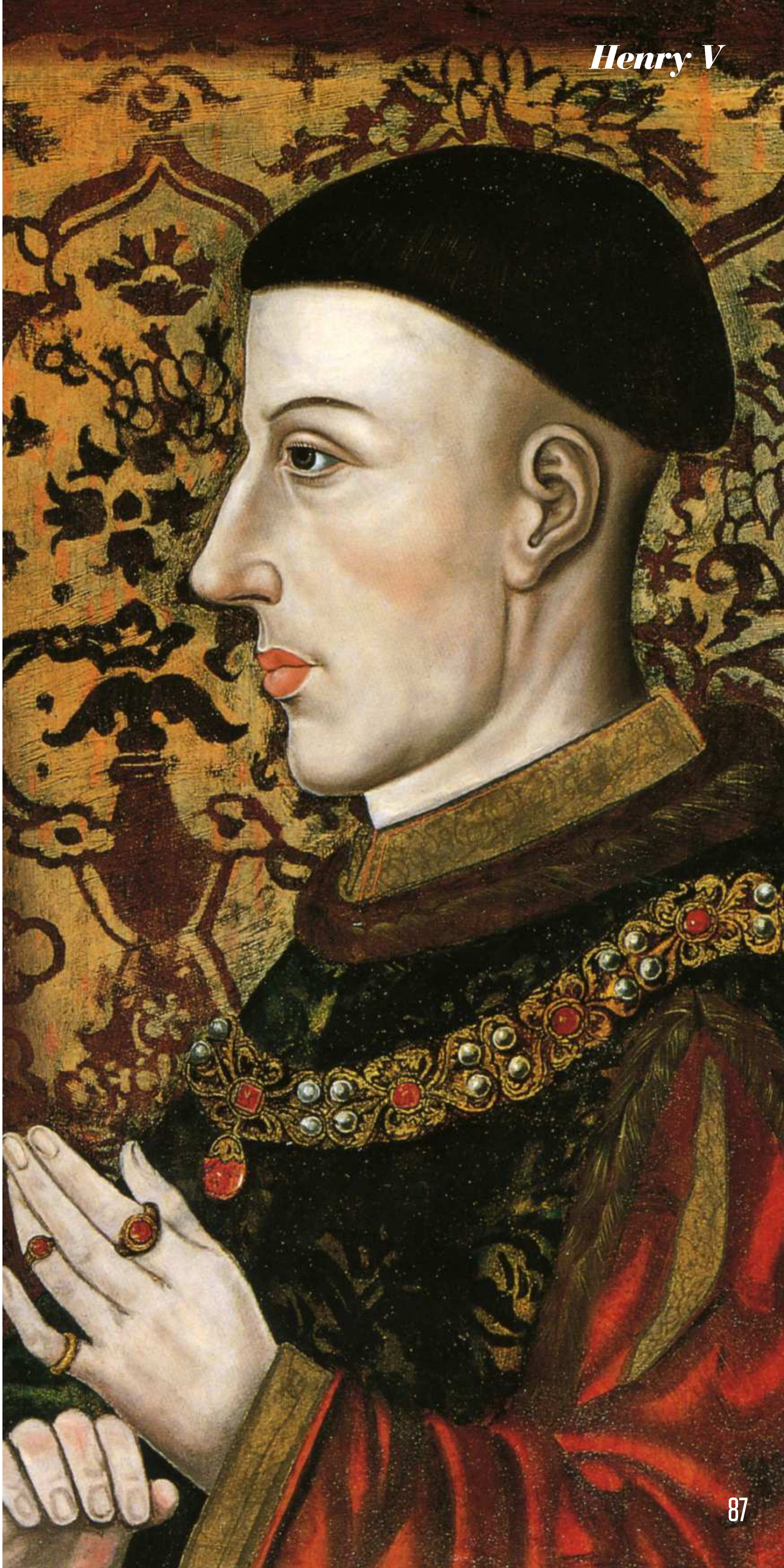
siege to the town of Meaux in October of the same year, but it wouldn’t surrender until May 1422. While he was away, Catherine gave birth to the future Henry VI in December 1421, but the two would never meet. In August, the monarch fell ill and could no longer lead his armies into battle. Humiliatingly, the warrior king had to be carried everywhere in a litter.

As his life drew to a close, Henry’s most pressing issue was the security of his two kingdoms, England and France. While he had a son back in England, he was still only a baby so Henry tasked his youngest brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, with the guardianship of the infant. Another of his brothers, John, Duke of Bedford, was charged with governing the territories in France.

About three weeks after the onset of the illness, Henry passed away at Vincennes on 31 August 1422. The king’s body was embalmed and taken north to Rouen Cathedral, where it lay in rest. It was then ferried across the English Channel and interred at Westminster Abbey, close to the tombs of Edward the Confessor and Henry’s father figure, Richard II. He never lived to be crowned king of France - Charles VI died just a few weeks after him. Henry has been remembered as a warrior king, leading his troops at Agincourt while Charles VI sat in his palace in Paris. Part of the reason his legacy has endured is due to William Shakespeare’s depictions of him in *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2* and Henry V, but there is no denying that he came incredibly close to taking France.



Catherine of Valois, Henry’s wife and the mother of Henry VI



A Clash of Kings at Agincourt

At the height of the Hundred Years' War, Henry V claimed victory in one of the Medieval period's bloodiest battles

While his father, Henry IV, had been preoccupied with consolidating – and in the process effectively legitimising – his rule, his son, King Henry V of England, saw the opportunity to expand Britain's holdings by taking back lands he believed rightfully belonged to him, starting with France.

In 1415, he proposed to marry Catherine, the daughter of the French king Charles VI, in addition to audaciously demanding the handover of the Plantagenet lands of Normandy and Anjou as her dowry. Unsurprisingly, Charles refused this offer from the upstart young king, with one account claiming that he sent the young Henry a case of tennis balls – the message being that his time would perhaps be better spent playing games than attempting to invade France.

Unperturbed by Charles' taunting, Henry set sail for France, determined to capture the throne for himself. As well as the prospect of regaining the lost lands of his ancestors, success abroad would have the effect of galvanising support back home, and in the process focus attention away from his cousins' royal ambitions. His success was almost instant.

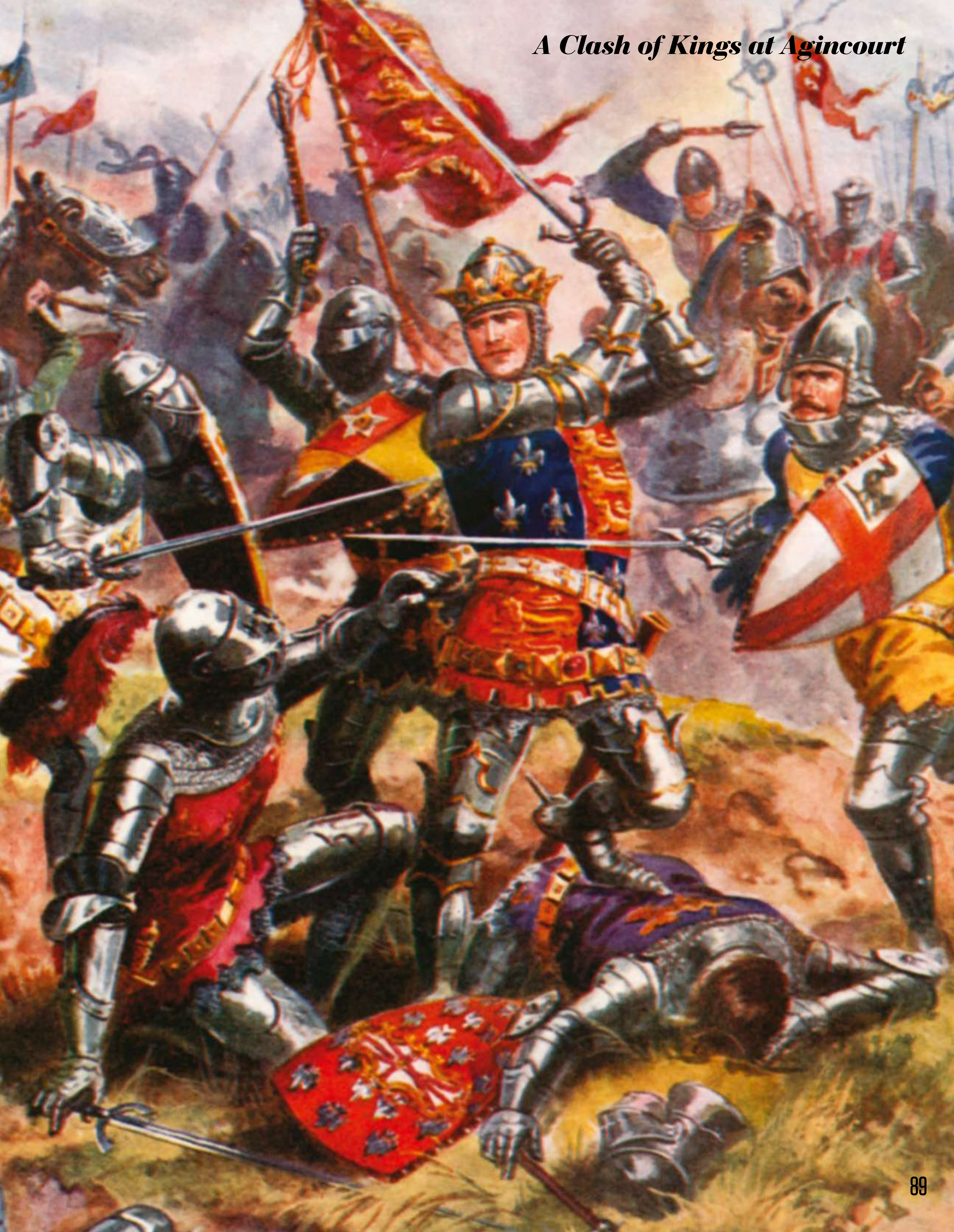
Immediately upon landing, he captured the port of Harfleur, although while on the way to the port of Calais he found his path blocked by an army that substantially outnumbered his own. Faced with this much-larger French force, he put his superior tactical acumen to good use, decimating the French soldiers with vast quantities of longbow archers.

Between 7,500 and 10,000 French soldiers are estimated to have been killed according to various accounts, with about 1,500 noblemen taken prisoner. Meanwhile, the English forces' casualties are numbered at around 112, with high-ranking noblemen like the duke of York and the earl of Suffolk being counted among the dead. Even more French prisoners were originally taken but in a show of calculated – but arguably justifiable – ruthlessness, Henry had ordered many of them to be put to death in order to avoid the possibility of them linking up with the remnants of the French forces in order to carry out a retaliatory attack.

Proving that this decisive victory was no fluke, Henry followed up this stunning victory with the conquest of Normandy – a campaign that lasted for three years. By June 1419, Henry controlled most of Normandy. Agincourt had not only been a military triumph; it had been a moral victory too, galvanising the English both abroad and at home.

Facing defeat, Charles agreed to the Treaty of Troyes, which formally recognised Henry as the heir to the French throne – at the expense of his own son – and finally allowed Henry to marry Catherine. Flushed with success, in February 1421 he returned to England for the first time in three and a half years, arriving in his homeland as a conquering hero.

His successful conquest of much of the country's hated enemy had made him extremely popular back home, and the Battle of Agincourt in particular would forever serve as a poignant example of his strength, tactical skill and ingenuity in battle – yet another example of the plucky underdog spirit and ability to triumph against the odds that British forces would go on to demonstrate in the future.

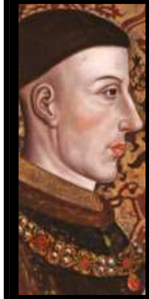


England

NUMBER OF TROOPS:
6,000-9,000

LONGBOWMEN: 5,000

KNIGHTS: 1,000



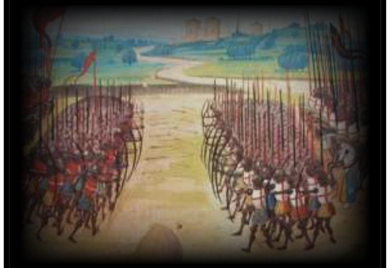
LEADER

KING HENRY V

King Henry was a skilled battle commander, leading his troops into battle and fighting alongside them.

Strengths Brave and experienced military leader.

Weaknesses His forces were numerically inferior to those of the French.



KEY UNIT

LONGBOWMAN

The effectiveness of the English longbowmen played a massive part in the success of the battle.

Strengths Long range and difficult to attack.

Weaknesses Relatively poorly armoured and vulnerable if attacked.

KEY WEAPON

LONGBOW

The deadly longbow's six arrows per minute could wound an enemy at 360 metres, kill at 180 metres and even penetrate armour at 90 metres.

Strengths Accurate and destructive in large numbers.

Weaknesses Finite number of arrows available to them.

01 Camping for the night

On 24 October, about 48 kilometres from Calais in the town of Frévent, English scouts reported an immense French army blocking the road ahead. Seeing that they could not pass without meeting them in battle, Henry ordered his forces to camp there for the night.

02 Taking their positions

The English positioned themselves across the road to Calais in three groups of knights and men-at-arms: the right side led by Lord Camoys, the left by Sir Thomas Erpingham and the duke of York in the centre. The French had the constable of France leading the first line, the dukes of Bar and d'Alençon the second and the counts of Merle and Falconberg in charge of the third.

03 Forward banners

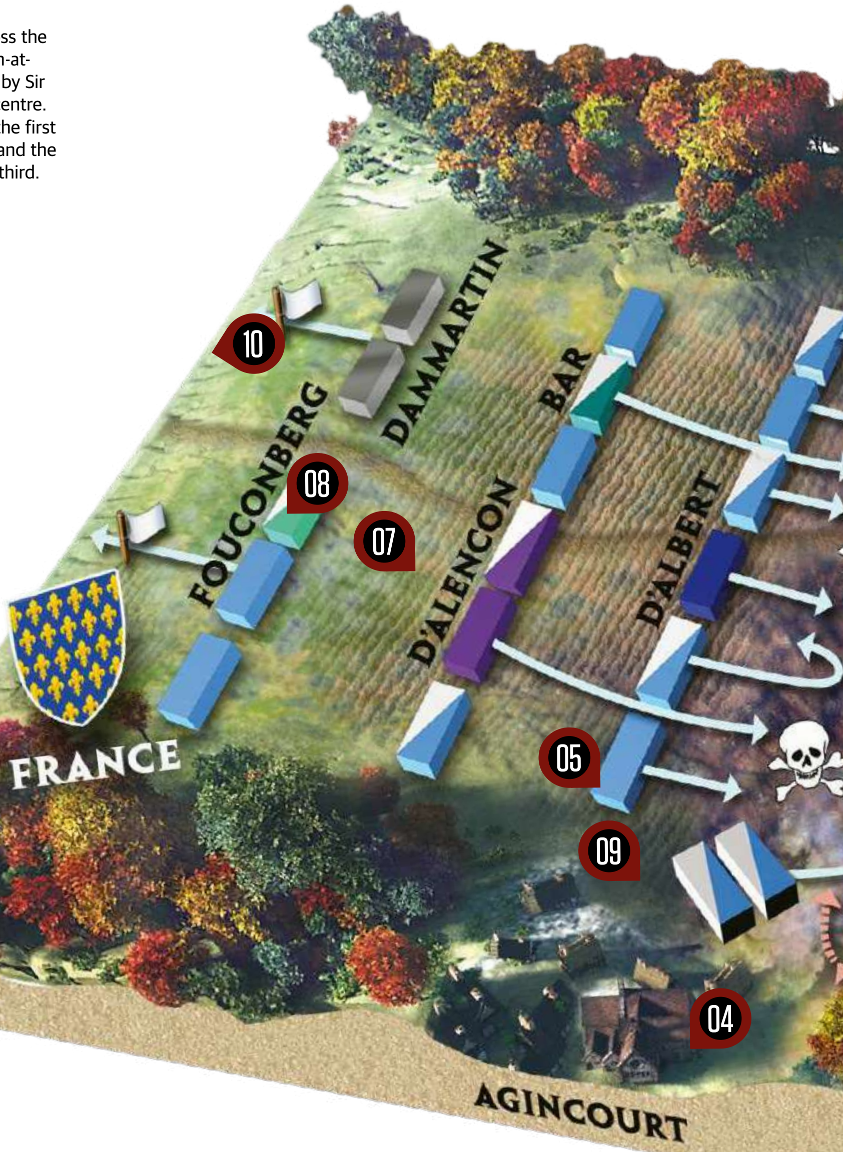
Bored of waiting for the French to begin the attack, Henry ordered his troops to advance. Once within range of the French archers, the English troops halted, the divisions closed and the archers set a series of pointed stakes in the ground, forming a fence. Within the woods surrounding the two armies, Henry directed groups of archers and men-at-arms to move through the trees to get closer to the French.

04 Arrows away

Shortly after, Henry gave the order for his archers to shoot the French, who were massed together in a big, unwieldy group. Taken by surprise, the French forces incurred very heavy casualties.

10 French camp ransacked

With the battle over and any local resistance crushed, the English troops ransacked the largely abandoned French camp, having secured a victory that would live on in legend.



05 French attempt to move forward

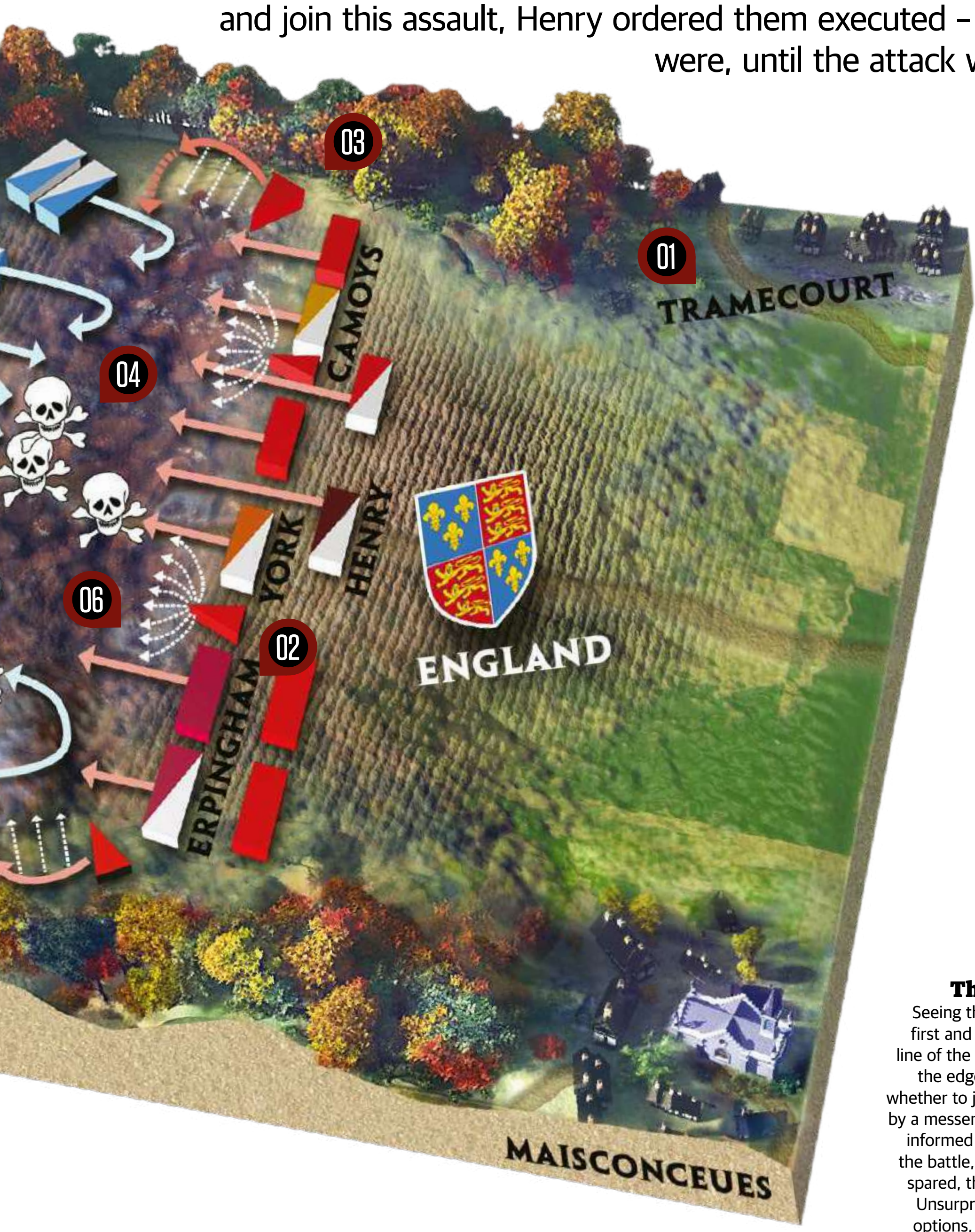
After the shock of this assault, the French forces tried to advance in order to take the battle to the English. However, having already suffered massive casualties, they were impeded by the dead and dying horses and men already shot down in front of them. Reduced to walking pace, they were easily picked off by the English archers concealed in the woodlands on the flanks.

06 Archers join the fray and flanks

With the battle continuing along the fence of stakes, the English archers abandoned their positions and joined the knights in fighting against the French cavalry forces – most of which had been forced to dismount – which were reinforced by soldiers attacking on the flanks.

09 Local French force attacks baggage

Although the main battle was over, it threatened to reignite when a local French force circumvented the forest and attacked the English baggage. Fearing the substantial amount of prisoners would rebel and join this assault, Henry ordered them executed – which many were, until the attack was repelled.



08

Third line retreats

Seeing the fate that had met the first and second waves, the third line of the French forces waited on the edge of the field, pondering whether to join. After being greeted by a messenger sent by Henry, who informed them that if they joined the battle, none of them would be spared, they made their decision. Unsurprisingly, considering their options, they left the battlefield.

07 French second line moves forward

The French second line, led by D'Alençon, moved forward in earnest to assist the beleaguered first line, but was overwhelmed in a similar fashion. Seeing the futility in continuing, he attempted to surrender to Henry, but was killed before he could reach the king.

France

NUMBER OF TROOPS:

36,000

LONGBOWMEN: 1,200

KNIGHTS: 8,800

LEADER

CHARLES D'ALBRET

The former Constable of France co-commanded the French army alongside Jean Le Maingre.

Strengths
Experienced soldier.

Weaknesses Low social rank, so orders were ignored by noblemen.

KEY UNIT

KNIGHTS

Much of the French forces consisted of heavy infantry, making them tough adversaries in open combat.

Strengths Heavily armoured and effective at hand-to-hand fighting.

Weaknesses Slow, cumbersome and easy to pick off by archers.

KEY WEAPON

HORSES

Large numbers of knights on horseback often presented an incredibly fearful sight for their opponents.

Strengths Fast and powerful opponents in battle.

Weaknesses Cramped and boggy locations made them useless.

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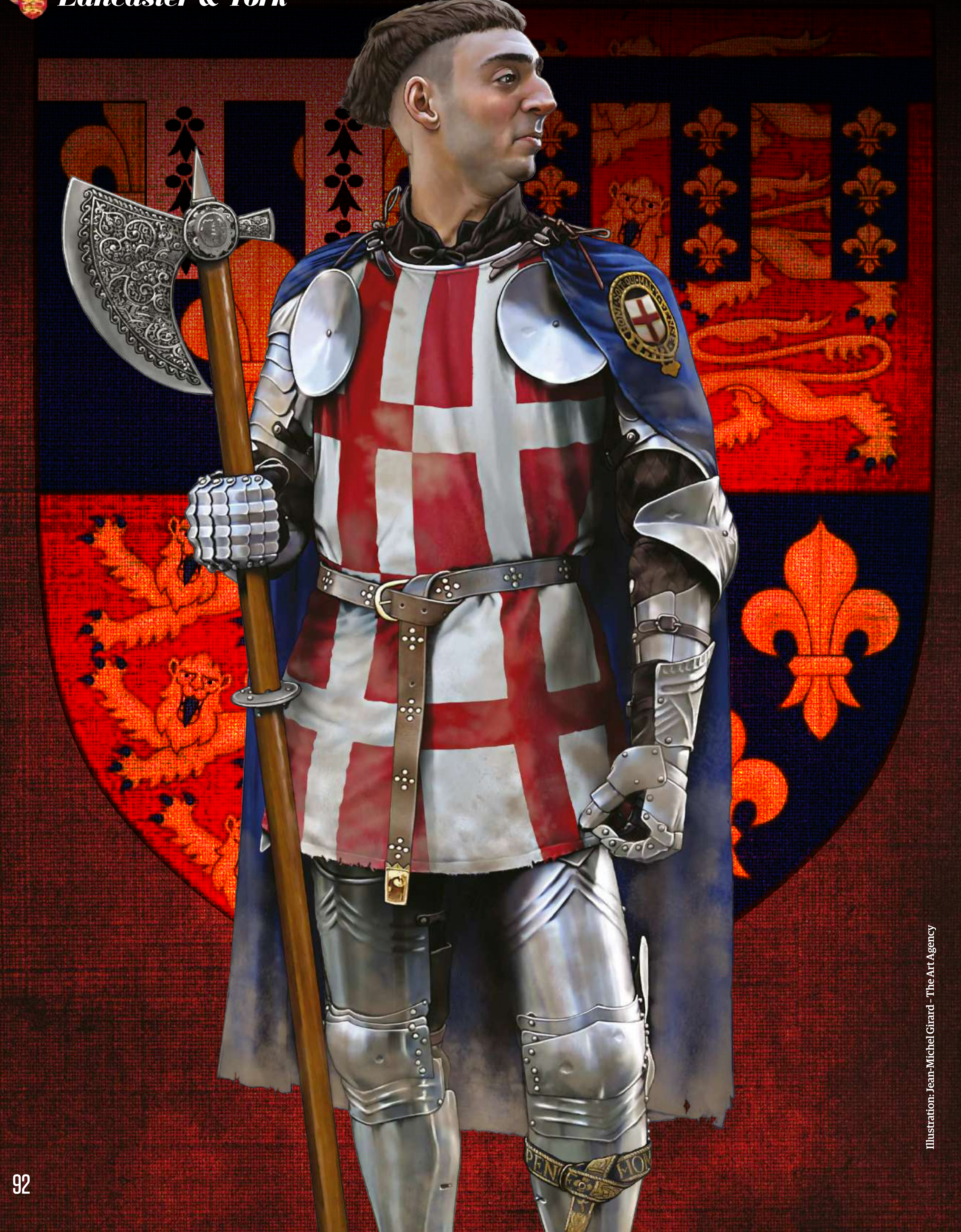
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Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard - The Art Agency

1389-1435

John, Duke of Bedford

Henry V's younger brother continued the English conquest of France with stunning success, winning a huge battle in 1424. However, his greatest threat would come from a teenage peasant girl: Joan of Arc

In the early 15th century, an outnumbered English army lined up against a superior enemy force in northern France. Some 9,600 men stood ready to fight and die for King Henry of England during the crown's ongoing struggle for control of France. With the help of longbows, the English won a resounding victory, against all the odds.

However, at this point comparisons with the Battle of Agincourt end. The king in question was not Henry V, but his two-year-old son Henry VI and the year was not 1415, but 1424. The battlefield itself was near a town called Verneuil, Normandy, and the English commander was Henry V's younger brother John, Duke of Bedford.

John's tremendous victory at Verneuil was soon dubbed by contemporaries as 'the Second Agincourt'. He is an overlooked figure today, but he was a talented general and politician who successfully continued the English conquest of France during the latter part of the Hundred Years' War after the premature death of his older brother in 1422.

That he should be forgotten today is something of a mystery as his military victories were some of the most important of the entire conflict, and his life was heavily influenced by two of the most famous people of the period: King Henry V and his arch-enemy, French peasant Joan of Arc.

A sea fight off Harfleur

As the king's brother, Bedford had been assigned the task of administering England in 1415, while Henry V pursued his campaign in France, culminating in the victory at Agincourt. The king's spectacular success had been preceded by the capture of the strategic port of Harfleur on the coast of Normandy but the adventure had been costly in casualties. Henry's overriding ambition was to complete the conquest of France that had been started by his great-grandfather Edward III. However, before 1415 the only English base on the northern French coast was Calais. Holding on to Harfleur was vital if Henry was to have an extra springboard for a second campaign to subdue Normandy and dictate terms.

The French knew this and started a naval blockade of Harfleur in April 1416 with the assistance of Genoese ships. The English had lost the initiative for the first time since Agincourt and a relief fleet was not able to sail until August. Henry couldn't take command as he was negotiating an alliance with the visiting Holy Roman emperor, Sigismund I, and instead sent Bedford to relieve Harfleur. Bedford was not an obvious choice for command as he had little military experience and he would be facing perhaps 150 French and Genoese carracks. Genoese ships in particular had a fearsome reputation but despite this, Bedford sailed to meet them with a fleet of about 100 ships and on 15 August engaged in a fierce fight at the mouth of the River Seine.

Medieval naval battles were capable of replicating land warfare. The opposing ships would use grappling hooks to join together and form a vast, floating, wooden battlefield. The English had used their superiority with longbows to successfully fight at sea before and repeated this tactic in 1416.

An anonymous English chronicler wrote: "Following an exchange of missiles… the fury of the combatants had reached boiling point. At last, after a long, drawn-out and most bitter fight of five or six hours, victory was yielded to the English."

The Battle of the Seine was hard-fought because neither of the sides could afford defeat. The French, whose pride had been dented at Agincourt, were determined not to lose control of the English Channel and the English did not want to forfeit their foothold in Normandy. The English victory was strategically important. Although Agincourt had been a tactical victory, it did not lead to immediate success in the war and Bedford's victory cannot be overlooked. If Harfleur had been recaptured, Henry would have had to restart his conquests from scratch, completely altering the course of history.

The relief of Harfleur enabled Henry to conquer Normandy in 1417, which in led to the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. This acknowledged Henry as the heir to the French throne and laid the foundations for a dual monarchy, but none of this would have been possible without Bedford's victory.

His conduct during the fight was praised by contemporaries who said, "No one had borne himself more bravely in that battle." Emperor Sigismund was moved to say to Henry, "Happy are those subjects that have such a king, but more is the king that has such subjects."

An unexpected regency

In 1422, Charles VI of France died and Henry V should have succeeded to the throne as king of both England and France. However, in one of history's most fateful ironies, the warrior king had died of dysentery just a few months before Charles at the age of 36, leaving his son Henry VI to inherit the dual kingdom instead.

Unfortunately, the new king was only nine months old and the English administration had divided his lands into two governments. Henry V's youngest brother, Humphrey, ran England, while Bedford was named as the regent of France. This was by far the hardest assignment, as Bedford had to continue his brother's conquests in the face of very stiff opposition by those who had regarded Charles VI's son, the dauphin, as the real and true king of France.

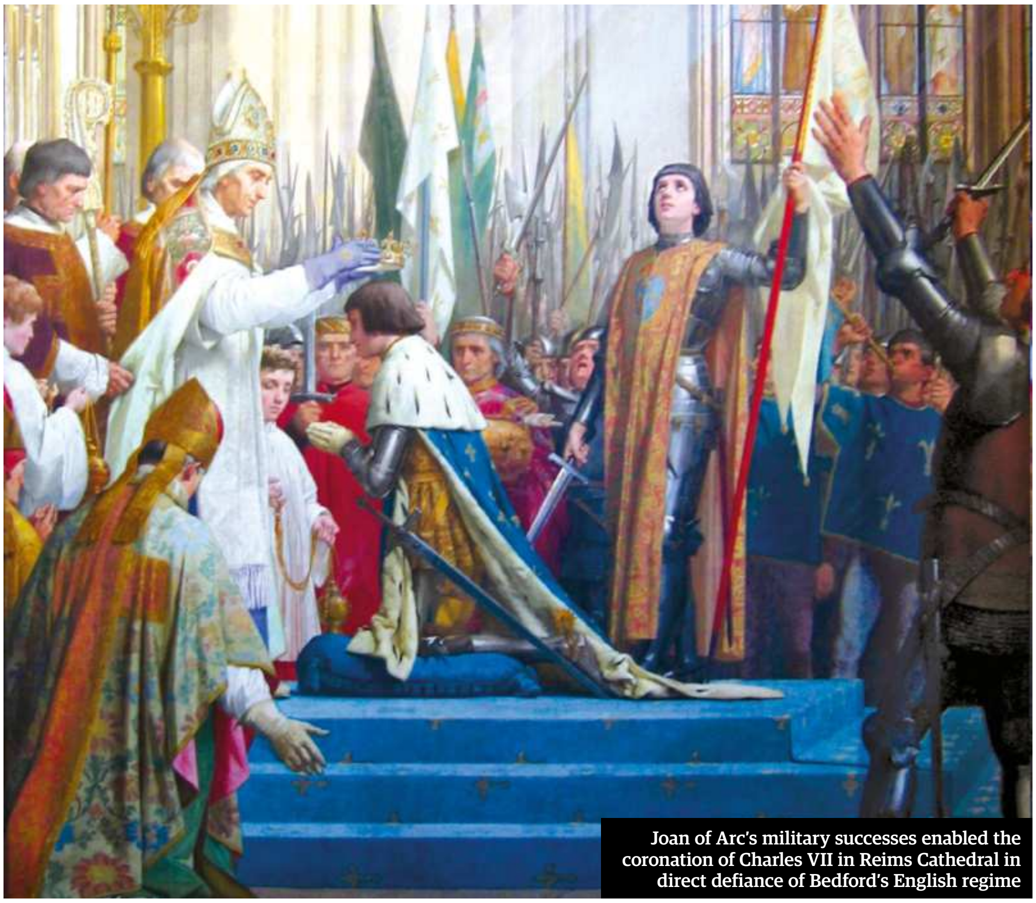
One Victorian historian said Bedford was "at once prime minister and commander-in-chief, he was virtually king of France". Additionally, Bedford had to maintain a tenuous alliance with the duke of Burgundy. Burgundian support was essential to Bedford as the English did not have a numerical superiority in France, but the alliance was shaky as Burgundy was a semi-dependent duchy and its duke was a slippery character who changed sides depending on the political climate. This meant that the English took on the bulk of the military offensive against 'Dauphinist' French armies.

Under Bedford's leadership the English armies had continued success in France. An Anglo-Burgundian army defeated a numerically superior Franco-Scottish army at Cravant in July 1423 and Bedford then intended to build up his army for a decisive stroke against the dauphin. His plan revolved around strengthening Normandy's frontiers by occupying Picardy and driving French troops from key towns on the River Somme. To achieve this, Bedford laid siege to Ivry, a town 30 miles west of Paris, but the French immediately captured the Norman border town of Verneuil in August 1424. Ivry surrendered on 14 August and Bedford rushed his army to recapture Verneuil. The battle that would take place outside its walls would secure Bedford's reputation.

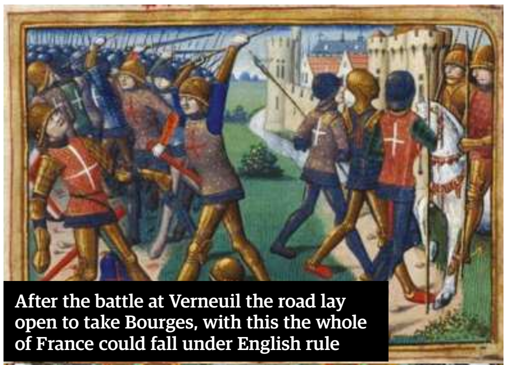
The 'Second Agincourt'

On 17 August, Bedford's army of approximately 9,600 men lined up across the north road. He arranged his army in the 'Agincourt' formation with his men-at-

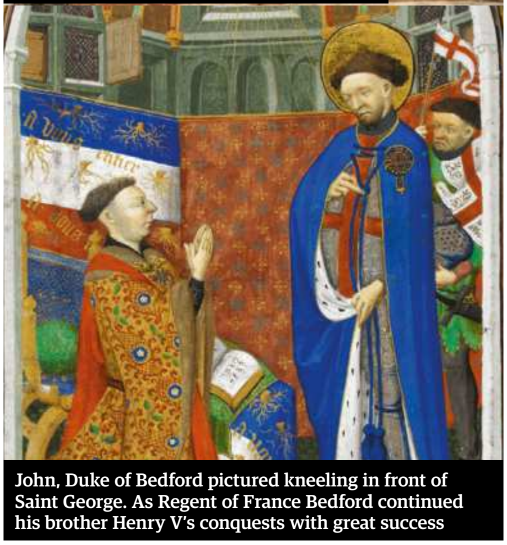
"For Bedford, the battle would be personal as it was a Scottish force that had killed his elder brother, Thomas, Duke of Clarence"



Joan of Arc's military successes enabled the coronation of Charles VII in Reims Cathedral in direct defiance of Bedford's English regime



After the battle at Verneuil the road lay open to take Bourges, with this the whole of France could fall under English rule



John, Duke of Bedford pictured kneeling in front of Saint George. As Regent of France Bedford continued his brother Henry V's conquests with great success arms in the centre and the famous archers on the flanks. There was also a reserve of 2,000 archers who formed a laager of wagons and horses to defend the baggage train.

Facing the English was a 'French' army of about 14,000 to 16,000 men but 6,000 of these troops were Scottish under the command of the earls of Douglas and Buchan. The Scots were vigorous allies of the French and had been a thorn in the side of the English for decades, and the dauphin had even appointed Buchan as constable of France.

Viscount d'Aumale was commanding this coalition army but the Scots had a great degree of influence. For Bedford, the battle would be personal as it was a Scottish force that had killed his elder brother, Thomas, Duke of Clarence, at the Battle of Baugé in 1421. A Burgundian eyewitness, Jean de Wavrin, who fought for the English, described the Anglo-Scottish enmity during the battle: "The English archers, and the Scots who were with the French, began to shoot each other so cruelly that it was horrible to look at them. They brought death with full force to those they attacked. After the shooting the parties attacked each other furiously, hand to hand."

Wavrin, who had fought at Agincourt, stated that Verneuil was a more ferocious battle: "Without doubt, I have never seen a finer company where there were so many nobles showing greater appearance of wanting to fight. I saw the assembly of Agincourt, but the assembly at Verneuil was the most formidable and the best fought." He went on to state: "This battle lasted about three-quarters of an hour, very terrible and bloody, and it was not in the memory of man to have two such mighty parties fighting for such a space of time without being able to tell to whom the loss or victory would turn…"

Eventually, however, victory turned decisively for the English. As at Agincourt, the archers played a part in the success but the fighting was much more hand-to-hand and the casualties were high. The English lost 1,600 men while the Franco-Scottish army had casualties of at least 7,000. The vast majority of these were the Scots who were virtually annihilated. Two days after the battle, Bedford confirmed: "There were very few Scots who were not slain." Contemporaries are unanimous about Bedford's leadership capabilities, with Wavrin saying, "The duke of Bedford did that day wonderful deeds of arms, and killed many a man with an axe that he held in two hands. He reached no one whom he did not fell, he was great in body and large in limbs, wise and brave in arms." The chronicler John Hardyng agreed, "The regent was there that day a lion, and fought in arms like any champion." Unlike Agincourt, Verneuil's strategic importance was profound. The battle destroyed the Scottish army and French morale, allowing the English to push further south towards the Loire River and securing Normandy from the French for nearly 30 years.

For five years after Verneuil, the English were virtually unopposed by the French until they laid siege to the town of Orléans between 1428 and 1429 when Bedford would first hear from his most famous foe, Joan of Arc.

The regent and the maid

Joan was an illiterate teenage peasant girl from Lorraine who claimed to hear voices from God telling her to liberate France from the English and helped to raise the Siege of Orléans. Her now famous 'Letter to the English' before her arrival was directly addressed to Bedford: "King of England, and you, Duke of Bedford, who call yourself Regent of France… Hand over to the Maiden (Joan) who is sent here by God, the keys to all the towns you have taken and violated in France. Duke of Bedford, the Maiden asks and requests that you will not cause your own downfall."

After the siege, French forces heavily defeated English armies and the dauphin was crowned as Charles VII at Reims Cathedral in July 1429. The English were on the back foot for the first time in years. However, Bedford was not present at either the siege or the subsequent defeats as he was running the English administration in Paris. He was incensed by Joan's presence and described her as "a disorderly and deformed travesty of a woman who dresses like a man and whose life is dissolute".

After the coronation, Charles and Joan marched on Paris and Bedford went with his army to confront the French at Montépilloy in August. The two armies faced each other for two days but neither attacked, which was highly unusual for both Bedford and Joan. Bedford refrained from attacking because his men were terrified of Joan's previous successes. On Joan's part it is recorded that she was "perpetually changing her resolutions; sometimes she was eager for combat, at other times not". This indecision indicates that Joan did not want a repeat of Verneuil and both armies withdrew on 16 August. Joan immediately went to attack Paris but Bedford had reinforced its defence and the siege immediately failed. Joan was captured by the Burgundians in May 1430, sold to the English and burned at the stake for relapsed heresy in May 1431.

Bedford was the only English general that Joan never defeated, either at a siege or on the battlefield, and if he is remembered at all today it is as 'the man who burned Joan of Arc'. This is erroneous as Joan was actually condemned by a largely French, pro-Burgundian ecclesiastical court, but Bedford ultimately would have agreed with their decision. The English advance into France may have stalled, but it was only when Bedford died of natural causes in 1435 at the age of 46 that the French started to reclaim territory before finally expelling the English from their lands in 1453.

Bedford was recognised as a great man during his lifetime. In 1433, the English Parliament wrote to Henry VI saying his uncle had "achieved many great things, especially the battle of Verneuil, which was the greatest deed done by Englishmen in our days, save the battle of Agincourt".

Even the French admired him. When Louis XI, who reigned in France between 1461 and 1483, was asked to demolish Bedford's tomb in Rouen Cathedral, he replied: "In his lifetime neither my father nor yours, for all their might, could make him budge one foot. Let his body rest. I account it an honour to have him remain in my domains".

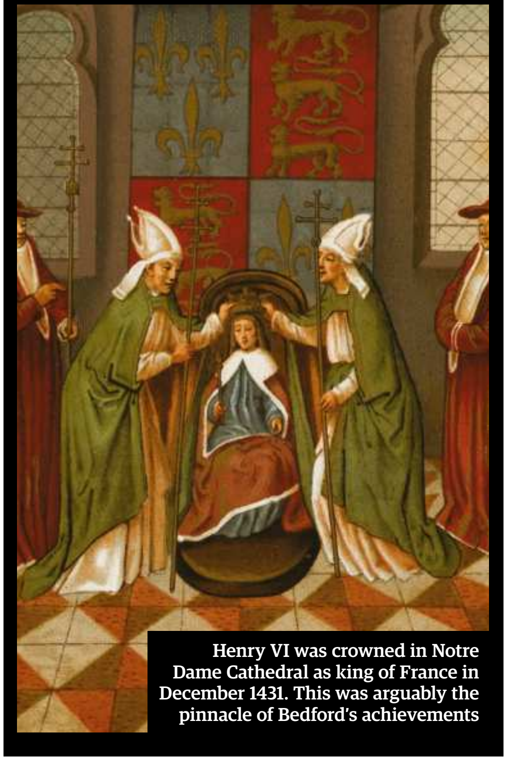
To the victor, the spoils

Largely thanks to his father, Henry V, and his uncle Bedford, Henry VI remains the only king of England to be crowned as king of France

It is commonly assumed that Joan of Arc's military successes caused the collapse of English rule in France. While this was true in the long term, it was not apparent in the early 1430s. In fact, Henry VI of England was crowned in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris as King of France on 26 December 1431, months after Joan had been executed. He was only ten years old but he had already been crowned as king of England on 6 November 1429. The ceremony was rich in symbolism for his dual kingdoms. He was announced as "born by descent and title of right justly to reign in England and in France".

The traditional site for crowning French kings was at Reims Cathedral but it was under hostile French occupation so Paris was the second option. Henry arrived in Paris on a white horse accompanied by his retinue and nobles, with Bedford prominent among them. He rode under a canopy, the symbol of rank and honour, and was greeted by the prominent Parisian bishops and burghers who all wore lavish costumes. Paris was decked out with colourful symbolic shields and statues to mark Henry's arrival.

During the coronation ceremony, the king was crowned by the Bishop of Winchester and the singing was apparently of a good standard. The same could not be said of the celebratory banquet, as the food that was organised by the English had been prepared three days before and was cold. In time-honoured tradition the French disapproved, with one Parisian writing, "This seemed very odd to the French."



Henry VI was crowned in Notre Dame Cathedral as king of France in December 1431. This was arguably the pinnacle of Bedford's achievements

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

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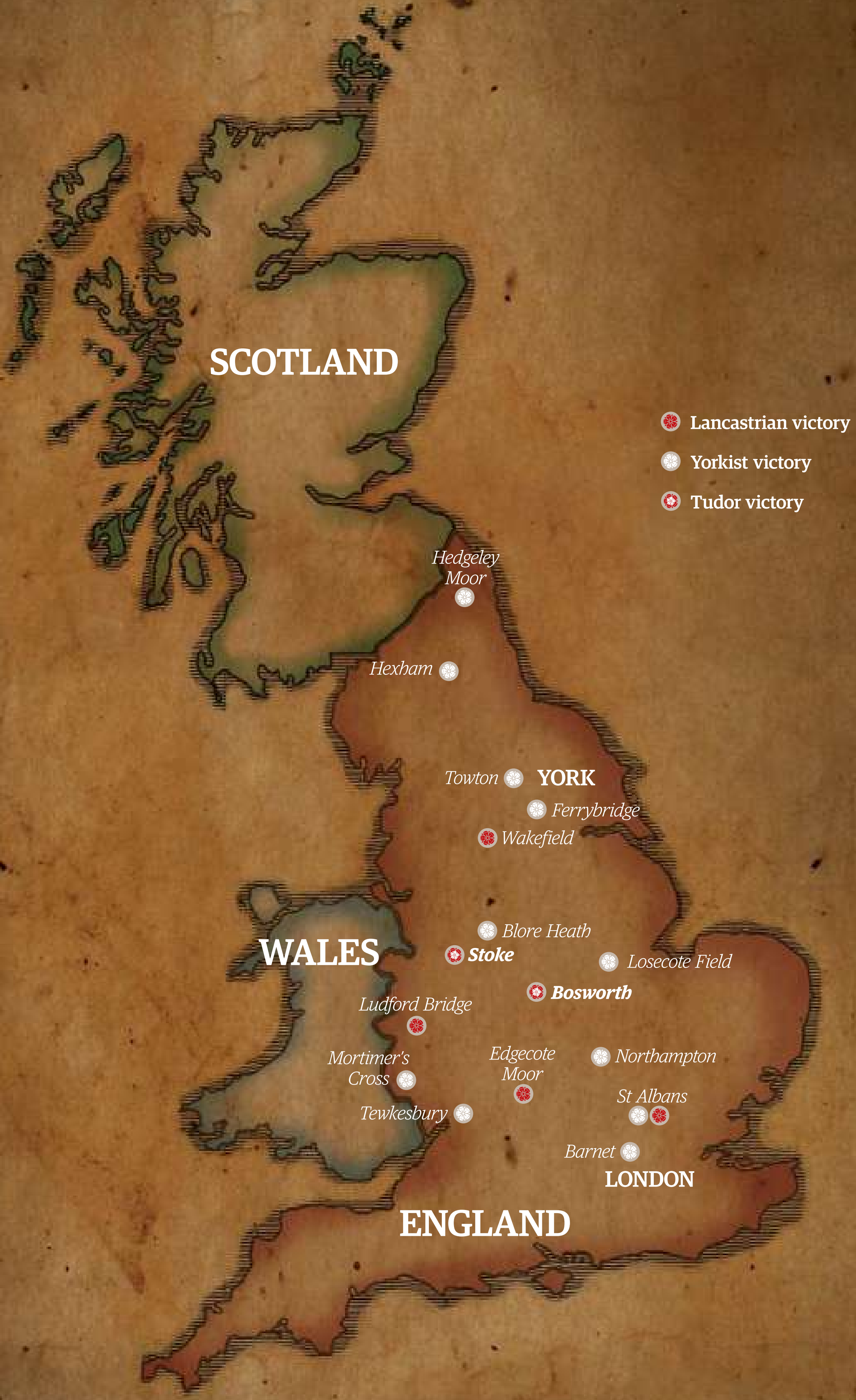

SCOTLAND
Lancastrian victory
Yorkist victory
Tudor victory
Hedgeley Moor
Hexham
Towton
YORK
Ferrybridge
Wakefield
Blore Heath
WALES
Stoke
Losecote Field
Bosworth
Ludford Bridge
Mortimer's Cross
Edgecote Moor
Northampton
St Albans
Tewkesbury
Barnet
LONDON
ENGLAND

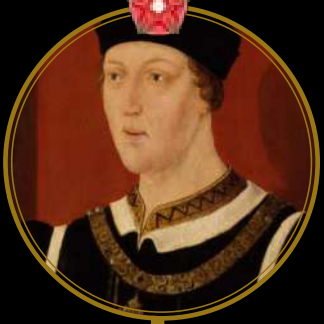
THE ROAD TO THE END

Uncover the battles that paved the way for the Plantagenets' demise

Written by William E Welsh

HENRY VI COMES TO THE THRONE

31 AUGUST 1422



Lancastrian victory

First Battle of St Albans

22 MAY 1455

Reformer Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, and his Neville allies ambushed King Henry VI's entourage at St Albans on its way to a great council at Leicester. Despite a stout defence at the town's barricaded gates, Richard Neville's Midlanders broke into the town. A fierce melee unfolded at the marketplace. Lord Clifford, Henry Percy, 2nd Earl of Northumberland, and Edmund Beaufort, 2nd Duke of Somerset, were slain in the confused fighting. York took Henry prisoner and established the Second Protectorate.

Battle of Blore Heath

23 SEPTEMBER 1459

Lancastrian James Touchet, Lord Audley, intercepted the forces of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, as they marched to join the Yorkist army at Ludlow Castle. Audley was tasked with arresting Neville and preventing his troops from reaching the castle. Audley twice charged the Yorkists with his cavalry, losing his life in the second charge. Command devolved to John Sutton, Lord Dudley, who led a dismounted assault that failed. Thereafter, the Lancastrian army unravelled and the Yorkists triumphed.

Yorkist victory

Lancastrian victory

Battle of Ludford Bridge

12-13 OCTOBER 1459

The Lancastrian royal army, led by Humphrey Stafford, 1st Duke of Buckingham, deployed for battle at Ludford Bridge in Shropshire against an entrenched Yorkist army led by Richard, Duke of York. A contingent from the Calais garrison defected to the Lancastrians the first night. Finding themselves heavily outnumbered as a result of the defection, York, his two sons and the earls of Salisbury and Warwick abandoned their army and fled to Wales. The Yorkist army was forced to disperse the following morning.

Battle of Northampton

10 JULY 1460

On its way back to London from Coventry, Henry VI's army entrenched at Northampton in anticipation of an attack by a Yorkist army led by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. When Warwick attacked the Lancastrian right, Edmund Grey's men, who were holding that part of the line, defected to the Yorkists. Once inside the enemy lines, Warwick's troops finished off the Lancastrian forces. The Duke of Buckingham was slain, and King Henry VI once again became a Yorkist prisoner.

Yorkist victory

Lancastrian victory

Battle of Wakefield

30 DECEMBER 1460

Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, travelled to Sandal Magna in Yorkshire in early winter to raise additional troops to prop up his position as Lord Protector. He also wanted to defeat a sizeable Lancastrian army that had assembled at Pontefract Castle under the command of Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset. The Lancastrians lured York into battle outside Sandal Magna and killed him. York's second son Edmund was slain as he attempted to flee.

Battle of Mortimer's Cross

2 FEBRUARY 1461

Edward, Earl of March, intercepted a Lancastrian army in Herefordshire preparing to march on London and free King Henry VI from captivity. Jasper Tudor, Duke of Bedford, James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire, and Owen Tudor (Bedford's father) each commanded a Lancastrian unit. Although Wiltshire's mercenaries routed the Yorkist left wing, the Yorkists under Edward and Sir William Herbert prevailed against Pembroke's Welsh troops. Sensing a Yorkist victory, the Lancastrian army fled the field.

Yorkist victory

Second Battle of St Albans

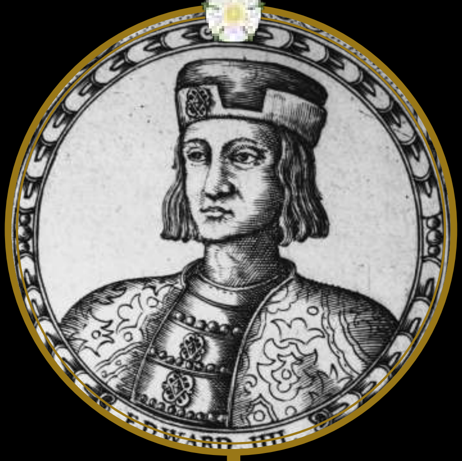
17 FEBRUARY 1461

Lancastrian victory

Queen Margaret's Lancastrian army, led by Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset, attacked the Yorkist army of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick at St Albans. Warwick had established a strong defensive position bristling with archers, handgunners and artillery, but inclement weather extinguished handgun matches and rendered the arrow barrages ineffectual. The Lancastrians successfully stormed the field fortifications and rolled up Warwick's left flank. Henry VI was freed from Yorkist captivity.

EDWARD IV COMES TO THE THRONE

4 MARCH 1461



Battle of Ferrybridge

27-28 MARCH 1461

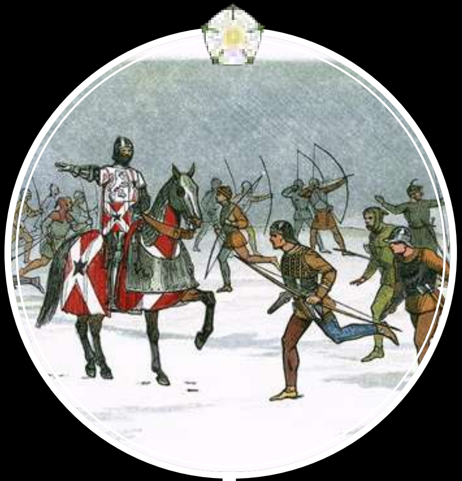
Yorkist victory

Edward, Earl of March, awaited reinforcements in Yorkshire before doing battle with the Lancastrians regrouping in the north. Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, established a bridgehead on 27 March on the north bank of the River Aire for the Yorkist forces marching to join Edward. Lancastrian lords John Clifford and John Neville drove the Yorkists back across the river the following morning. Later that day, Yorkist mounted archers crossed upstream, outflanking the Lancastrians and slaying Lord Clifford.

Battle of Towton

29 MARCH 1461

A storm of arrows by Yorkist archers goaded the Lancastrians into a headlong attack. After six hours of combat, John de Mowbray, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, arrived with Yorkist reinforcements. His men crushed the left flank of the Duke of Somerset's Lancastrian army. The Lancastrians fled towards the flooded River Cock only to be cut down in large numbers in a meadow by pursuing Yorkist cavalry. Edward IV was subsequently crowned in London on 28 June.



Yorkist victory

Battle of Hedgeley Moor

25 APRIL 1464

Yorkist victory

John Neville, Lord Montagu, led a Yorkist army into Northumberland to clear Lancastrian forces led by Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset, from northeastern England. Following an inconclusive archery duel, the left wing of the Lancastrian army fled the field before the two sides made contact. Montagu's army then fell upon the remaining Lancastrians. Heavily outnumbered, most of the remaining Lancastrians fled. However, Sir Ralph Percy's troops held their ground only to be slaughtered.

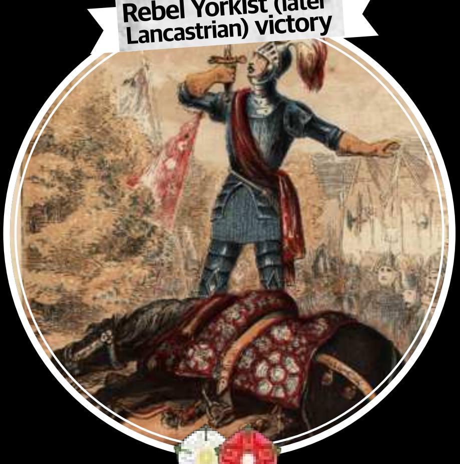
Battle of Hexham

15 MAY 1464

The Lancastrians continued to pose a threat in the north by fomenting a Lancastrian uprising. John Neville, Lord Montagu, launched a surprise attack on their camp near the Devil's Water, a tributary of the River Tyne. Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset, hurriedly deployed his inferior forces in a field with his back to the Devil's Water. A downhill charge by the Yorkists shattered the Lancastrian line and pushed the Lancastrians into the stream. Somerset was captured in a barn and beheaded the same day.

Yorkist victory

Rebel Yorkist (later Lancastrian) victory



Battle of Edgecote Moor

26 JULY 1469

A Yorkist rebel army led by Robin of Redesdale encountered Yorkist royal forces under William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Humphrey Stafford, 1st Earl of Devon, in Oxfordshire. On the morning of the battle Redesdale inflicted substantial losses on Pembroke's Welsh footsoldiers. Devon, encamped with his archers in a separate location, failed to reinforce Pembroke. When the vanguard of the Earl of Warwick's army arrived, the reinforced rebel army completed the rout of Pembroke's forces.

Yorkist victory

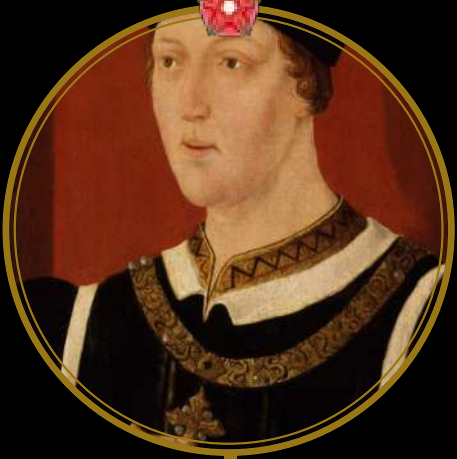
Battle of Losecote Field

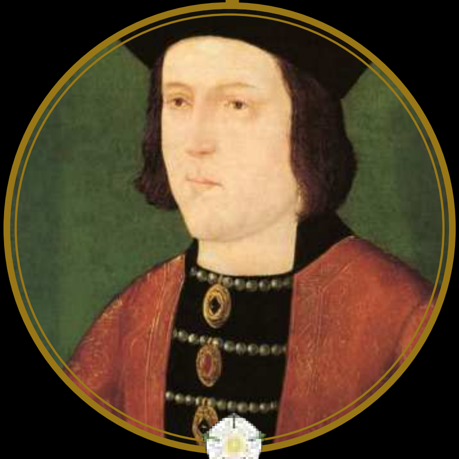
12 MARCH 1470

Robert Welles' rebels planned to join forces with traitors the earl of Warwick and George Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence, at Leicester, but at the last minute they lost heart. King Edward IV overtook the rebels near Empingham. The rebels formed up with shouts of "a Warwick!" and "a Clarence!", yet they were unable to stand up to a charge by the royal troops. Collapsing in the face of the onslaught, the rebels fled for their lives, flinging off jackets bearing the livery of Warwick and Clarence.

HENRY VI RETURNS TO THE THRONE

3 OCTOBER 1470





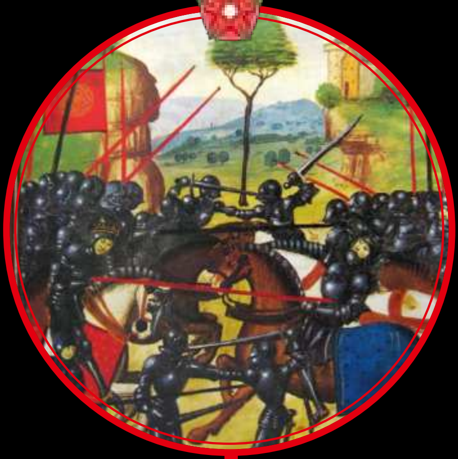
EDWARD IV RETURNS TO THE THRONE

11 APRIL 1471

Battle of Barnet

14 APRIL 1471

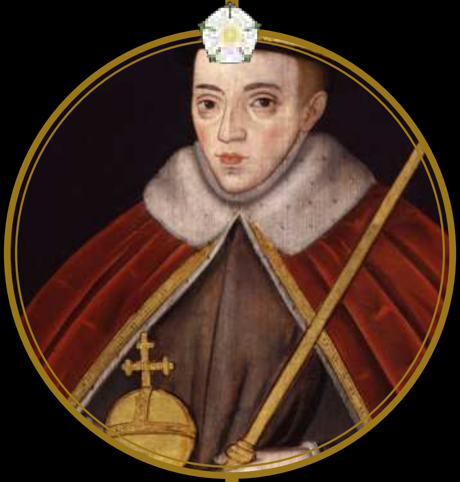
King Edward IV intercepted the Lancastrian army of former ally Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, as it marched southward to London. In the initial fighting both right wings succeeded against the opposing left wings. The Lancastrian right rallied and returned to the fight, but in the fog it inadvertently attacked the Lancastrian centre. Edward took advantage of the confusion and committed his reserve. The Yorkists drove the Lancastrians from the field. Warwick was cut down in the bloodletting that quickly ensued.



Lancastrian victory

EDWARD V COMES TO THE THRONE

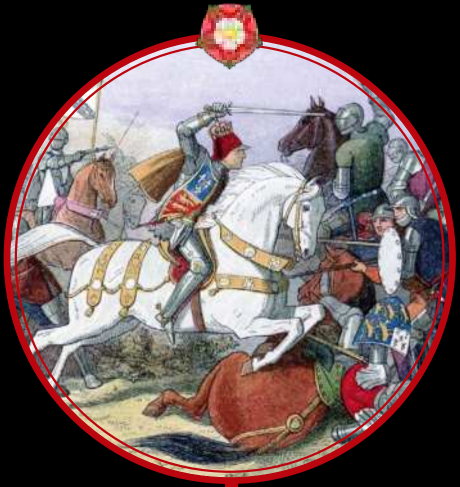
9 APRIL 1483



Battle of Bosworth

22 AUGUST 1485

Hoping to seize the throne from King Richard III, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, led his Lancastrian army into battle against Richard's Yorkist army in Leicestershire. Lord Thomas Stanley and Sir William Stanley initially refused to commit their forces to either side. The two armies clashed while the Stanleys looked on. Richard, hoping for single combat with Henry, tried to reach his opponent but was unhorsed and slain. The Stanleys' troops then made their choice and aided Henry in routing the Yorkists.



Tudor victory

Battle of Stoke

16 JUNE 1487

Aggrieved Yorkists used English commoner Lambert Simnel to impersonate Edward, 17th Earl of Warwick, even though the ruse was implausible given that Edward was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Following preparations in Ireland, the pretender's mercenary army of Irish, Germans and Swiss landed in Lancashire. King Henry VII's army intercepted the rebel army in Nottinghamshire. Although the royal vanguard was mauled by the Yorkists, the main royal army arrived just in time to completely crush the young pretender's forces.

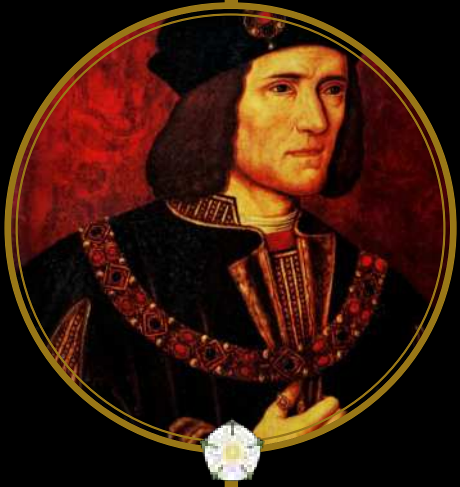
Tudor victory

Yorkist victory

Battle of Tewkesbury

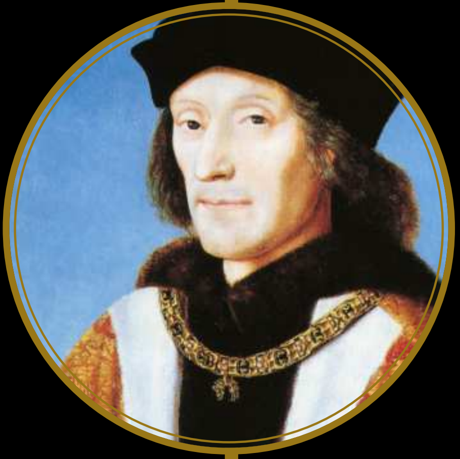
4 MAY 1471

Queen Margaret's Lancastrian army, led by Edmund Beaufort, 4th Duke of Somerset, was overtaken by Edward IV's Yorkist royal army in Gloucestershire. The Lancastrians launched a surprise flank attack against the Yorkist left wing, but Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, successfully checked the assault. After softening the enemy line with arrows and shot, Edward attacked and routed the Lancastrians. Somerset was executed, Margaret driven into exile and Henry VI imprisoned in the Tower of London.



RICHARD III COMES TO THE THRONE

26 JUNE 1483



HENRY VII COMES TO THE THRONE

22 AUGUST 1485

1421-71

Henry VI

The only king to rule both England and France, Henry's life was far from happy thanks to bouts of madness

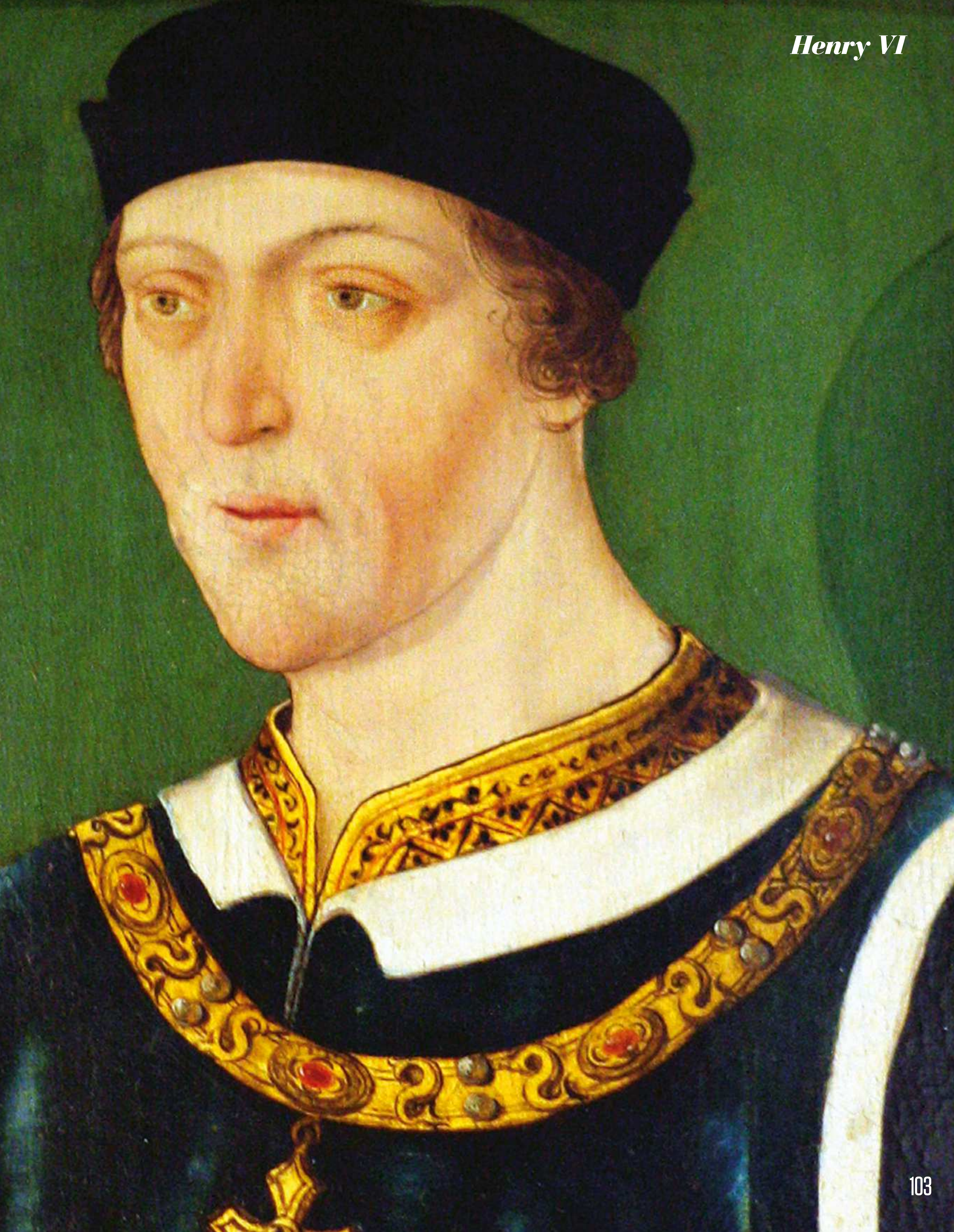
Written by Derek Wilson

Charles VI, king of France, was made of glass. That meant that if he was jostled, bumped into or fell over, he was at risk of shattering. So, at least, he believed. The 'glass delusion', as psychologists call it, was one aspect of a psychotic disorder which came upon him, apparently quite suddenly, in his mid-twenties. For the rest of his life Charles suffered bouts of mental illness which revealed itself sometimes as deep depression and inertia and, at others, as violent outbursts of rage. England's tragedy was that Charles' grandson, Henry VI, inherited this mental instability.

It could not have happened at a worse time. The Anglo-French war, which had been in progress intermittently since 1338, was brought to a peaceful conclusion at the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. Or, at least, it should have been. After a successful military campaign, England's Henry V imposed a settlement on his old enemy by the terms of which he married Charles' daughter, Catherine, and was acknowledged as heir to the French throne. Unfortunately, Henry V died in 1422, leaving all his responsibilities on both sides of the Channel to his son, born only nine months earlier. The resulting weak leadership was a major cause of continuing Anglo-French conflict and also of the disintegration of English political life, later known as the Wars of the Roses.

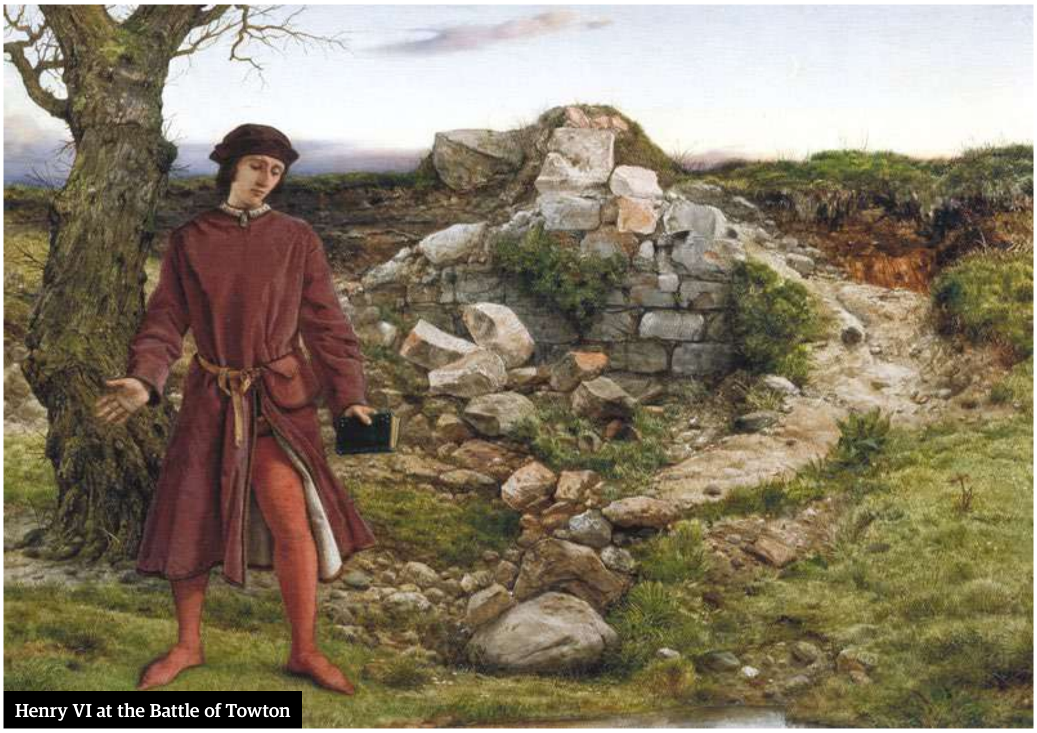
The long minority of Henry VI led to clashes between noble factions struggling for power in both countries. That might not have been quite so disastrous if the king had inherited the forceful leadership qualities of his father. Instead, he took after his maternal grandfather. However, it was not until he was in his 30s that he displayed serious mental instability and his failure as an effective leader cannot be attributed solely to madness. He was by nature quiet, contemplative and pious, more suited to a monastic than a regal vocation. He was the first English king not to lead his armies into battle. His most enduring legacies were the foundation of Eton College, King's College, Cambridge, and All Souls College, Oxford, as centres of holy learning where free education was provided for poor scholars.

Part of Henry's misfortune – and this must have played a part in the development of his character



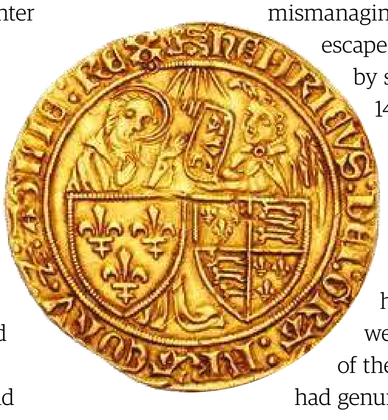
Henry VI

Eton College was one of the educational institutions founded by Henry VI



Henry VI at the Battle of Towton

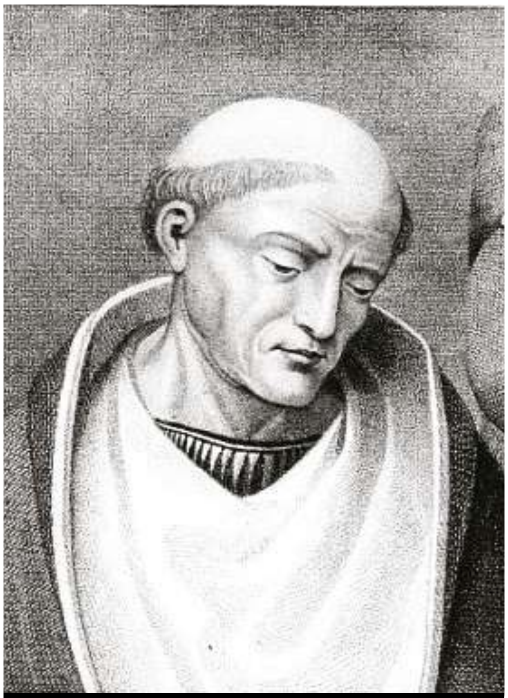
> "In Henry's name Margaret instituted what amounted to a reign of terror, using inquisitorial methods to force obedience"



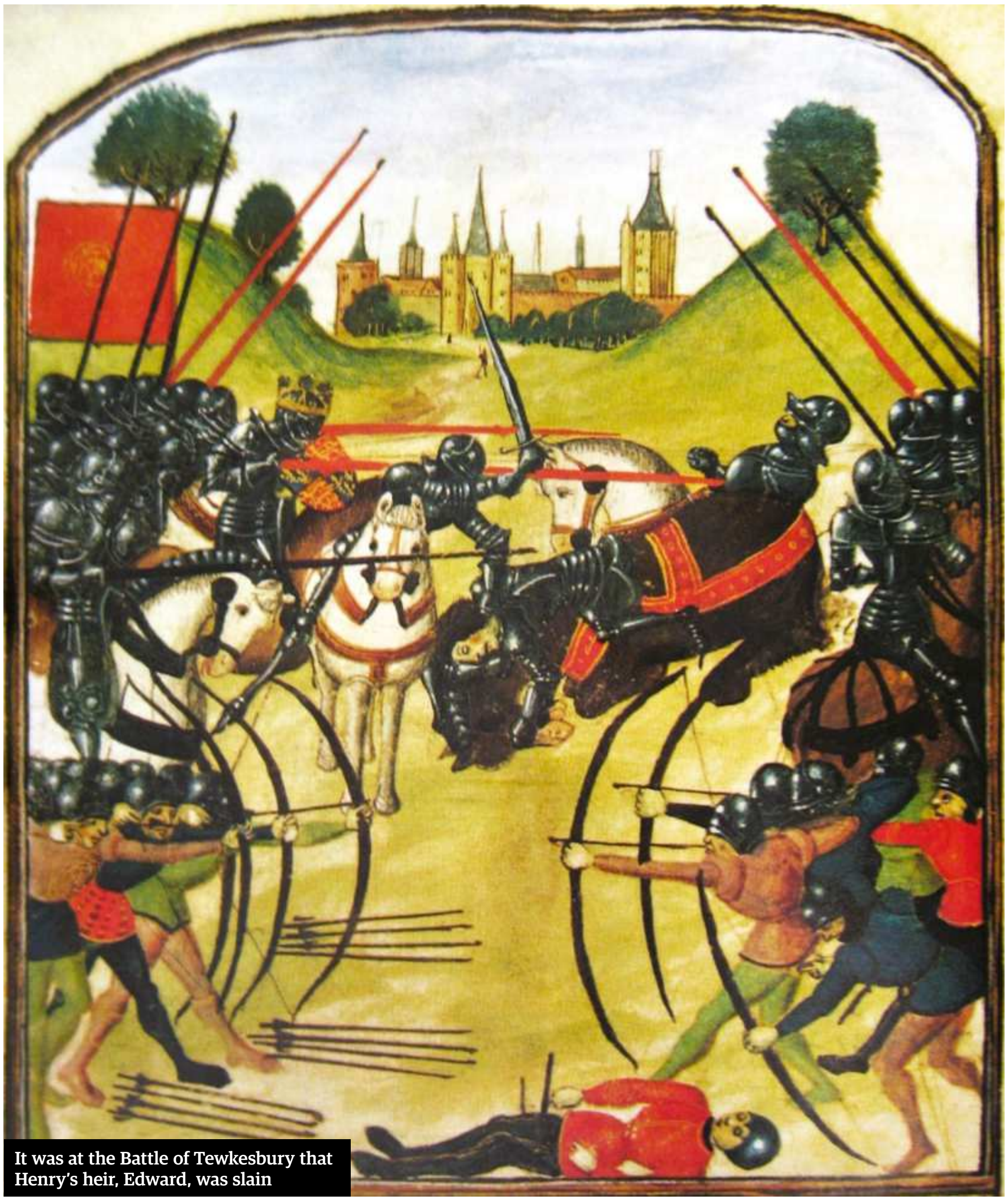
– was that he was always dominated by other people. In his early years, government was in the hands of his great-uncle, the bishop of Winchester, and his uncle, the duke of Gloucester, two advisers who were usually at odds with each other. The main bone of contention was the war in France, which was going badly. Charles VI's son claimed his father's throne and was crowned Charles VII at Reims in July 1429. To counter this, young Henry was conveyed to Paris with a large entourage and crowned king of France in December 1431. The war went badly for England, thanks, partly, to the extraordinary intervention of Joan of Arc, who invigorated Charles and his men. Government counsels in England were divided between those who advocated more resolute military activity and those in favour of making peace. After abortive attempts a settlement was eventually reached in 1444, sealed by the marriage of Henry and Margaret, daughter of the Count of Anjou. This was welcomed as holding out the hope of a future heir to the throne, but peace was bought at a high price because England was obliged to give up the provinces of Maine and Anjou. Moreover, this sacrifice did not stop the war. The death of Gloucester and of Winchester in 1447 might have enabled the king, at long last, to become his own man, but he proved unequal to the challenge by leaning for support and guidance on his friend, the duke of Suffolk.

Widespread discontent was by now gripping the country. Parliament indicted Suffolk for mismanaging affairs and, when he tried to escape to France, he was murdered by sailors at Dover. When, in 1450, Normandy fell to the French popular anger turned to rebellion. This province had been under the English crown for almost 400 years. Thousands of English families had settled there. Now they were forced to flee, leaving most of their possessions behind. They had genuine cause for discontent with Henry VI's government (or, what they regarded as lack of government). The returning refugees made up part of a rising which began in Kent under the leadership of Jack Cade.

A significant result of Cade's rebellion was the emergence of the queen as a political force. She now became another in the lengthening list of domineering personalities in Henry's life. A combination of events in 1453 brought her to prominence. In July, England suffered the final humiliation of the loss of the agriculturally rich province of Gascony. Of all the continental territories that had, for centuries, paid homage to the English crown, only Calais remained. In October Margaret gave birth to a son, Edward, Prince of Wales. The king did not acknowledge the child, for it was at this time that he suffered his first mental breakdown. His shocked councillors now had the task of appointing a regent to govern



The regency council of Henry VI was headed by the bishop of Winchester (above) and the duke of Gloucester



It was at the Battle of Tewkesbury that Henry's heir, Edward, was slain

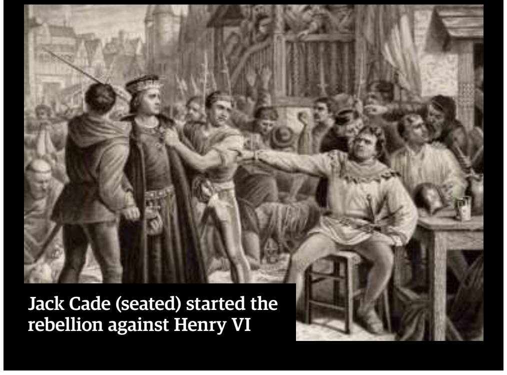
Cade's rebellion

In 1450, Jack Cade led a popular uprising against the reign of Henry VI

This revolt was no rabble. Cade's followers made up a cross-section of society angry at the king's misrule, who marched to Blackheath, southeast of London, and published their demands in placards sent to the king and widely distributed. The list of grievances was long but was summed up in these words from the petition:

"Our sovereign lord must understand that his false council hath lost his law, his merchandise is lost, his common people is destroyed, the sea is lost [the French had gained control of the Channel], France is lost, the king himself is so set that he may not pay for his meat nor drink..."

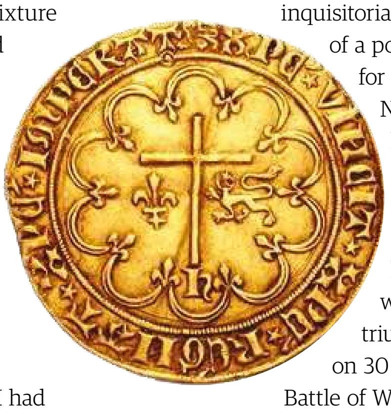
Henry set out with an army to meet the rebels, who immediately dispersed. However, when the king tried to round them up, several of his own captains refused to proceed against their countrymen. Henry turned tail and Cade re-established his base on Blackheath. Growing bolder, he moved to Southwark in July and sympathisers from Essex set up camp at Mile End. There was no effective opposition from the city, where many were sympathetic to his cause. It was only when Cade's followers fell to looting the houses of rich merchants that support waned. At this point it was Queen Margaret who seized the opportunity, offering pardons to all who would disperse. The insurgents were quick to respond. Cade was captured and killed and the rising fizzled out. No thanks to King Henry.



Jack Cade (seated) started the rebellion against Henry VI

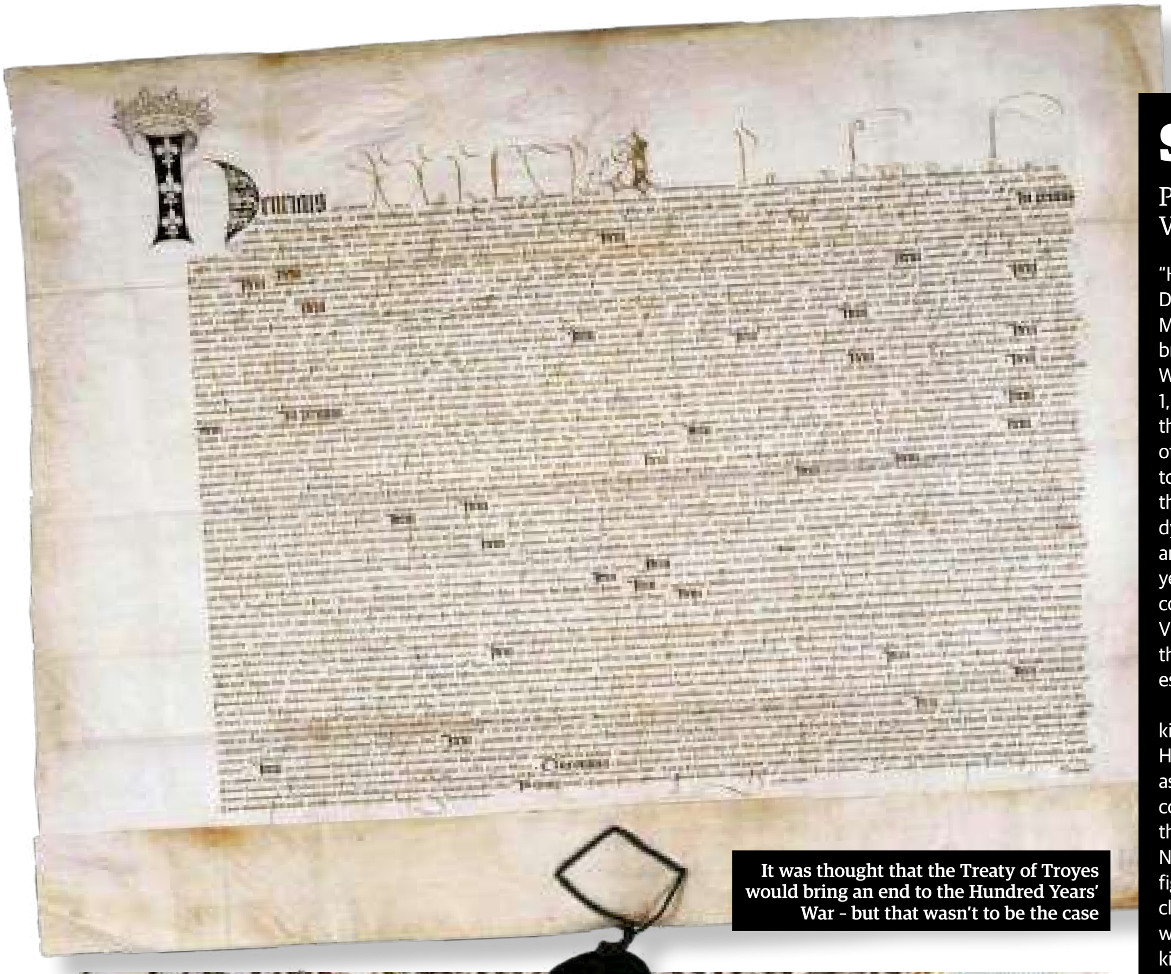
in the king's name until such time as he either died or regained his senses. Margaret claimed this position but was challenged by Richard, Duke of York, the heir presumptive after the infant prince. York's supporters claimed that only the duke could provide the firm government necessary to restore some degree of national unity and stability. Margaret feared for her own position and that of her son and suspected York of personal ambition. England's nobles took sides. Thus began that confrontation between Lancastrians and Yorkists later called the Wars of the Roses (Henry VI and Richard of York were heirs respectively of the first dukes of Lancaster and York, sons of Edward III).

Stability might, possibly, have been achieved had Henry remained incapacitated. A committee of lords elected York protector of the realm until Edward came of age. But, around the end of the year, Henry's sanity returned. Margaret asserted her will and Henry removed York from his council. When a new parliament was summoned all suspected Yorkists were excluded. It seemed to the Yorkists a case of "the mixture as before". Incompetence would continue to reign. Richard marched towards London with a small army to claim his position in government. A minor affray at St Albans became the first 'battle' of the Wars of the Roses.

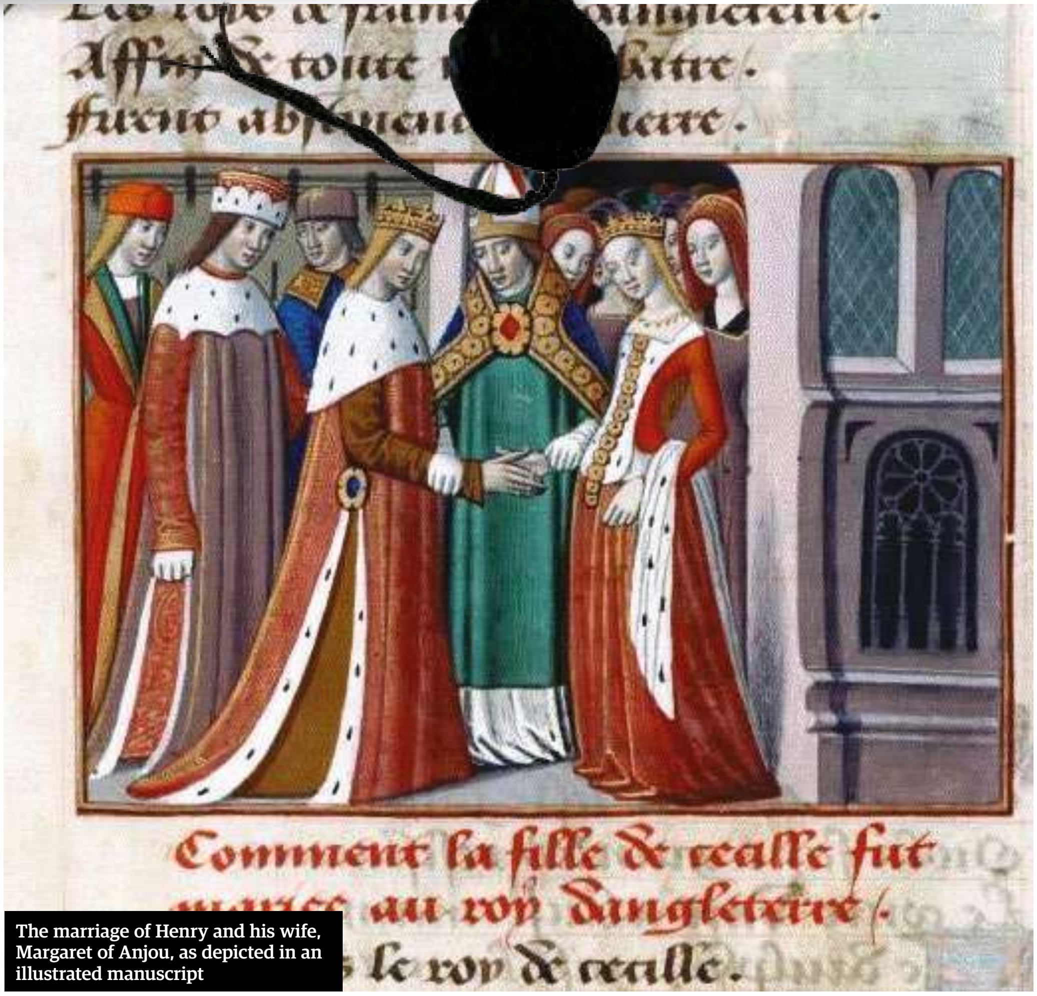


To the weak government of the previous three decades were now added the misery of intermittent civil war. Henry VI had further bouts of madness (his condition became permanent in 1460) but, whether sane or not, he was a mere cypher. Margaret and the captains she appointed maintained Henry's grip on the crown. In his name Margaret instituted what amounted to a reign of terror, using spies, informers and inquisitorial methods to force the obedience of a populace who had no respect for their sovereign. In a battle at Northampton on 10 July 1460 the king was captured and taken to London, and on 30 October he accepted a constitutional settlement decreeing that, after his death, the duke of York would inherit the crown. York's triumph was short-lived, however: on 30 December he was killed at the Battle of Wakefield and his army scattered.

That did not end the war. The Yorkist cause was taken up by Richard's son, Edward, Earl of March. Although Margaret was able to rescue



It was thought that the Treaty of Troyes would bring an end to the Hundred Years' War – but that wasn't to be the case



The marriage of Henry and his wife, Margaret of Anjou, as depicted in an illustrated manuscript

Saint and martyr

Political correctness refashioned Henry VI when the Tudors came to power

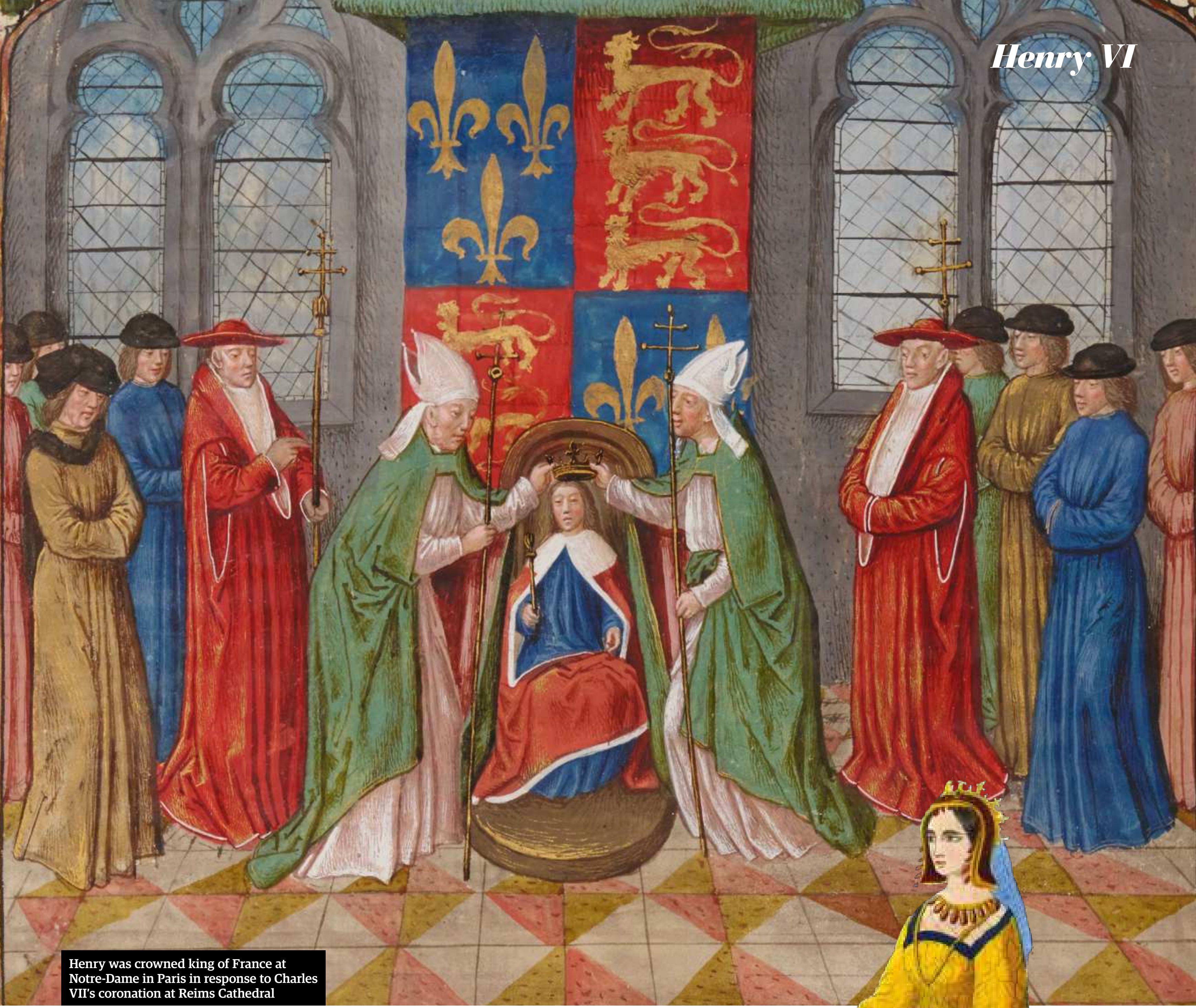
"Harry, that prophesied thou shouldst be king,
Doth comfort thee in thy sleep. Live and flourish."

More than a century after the Battle of Bosworth which brought the Lancastrian heir, Henry Tudor, to power, William Shakespeare wrote four plays – *Henry VI*, Parts 1, 2 and 3 and *Richard III*. Henry's final appearance in the sequence is as a ghost who haunts the dreams of Richard and his rival on the night before the battle to bestow his blessing on the man about to become the first Tudor king – and, by extension, on the new dynasty. After the murder of Henry VI, Edward IV and his dysfunctional family remained in power for 14 years. Henry Tudor asserted his right to the throne by conquest and descent from Catherine of France, Henry V's wife. This was not a strong hereditary claim and the first Tudor needed to do everything possible to establish the legitimacy of his dynasty.

One technique was to re-invent the last Lancastrian king. In the *History of England*, commissioned by Henry VII from Polydore Vergil, Henry VI was lauded as, "pure and clean, partaker of none evil, ready to conceive all that was good, a condemner of all those things which commonly corrupt the minds of men". No mention of insanity. The royal victim became a cult figure. His relics were venerated. Miraculous cures were claimed by sufferers who prayed to him. Negotiations were begun with Rome to have the last Lancastrian king canonised as a saint. In 1503 Henry VII began construction of a splendid new chapel at Westminster Abbey to house the dead king's remains. But Henry VI's body was never transferred to the new building. Nor was he ever officially designated as a saint. History moved on, and The Tudor dynasty became securely established. The regime no longer had any need for Mad King Harry.

her husband, she was obliged to take refuge in Scotland because the city of London had opened its gates to the Yorkist claimant, who had himself crowned Edward IV. She attempted an alliance with Mary of Guelders, who was in a situation not entirely different from her own. The Burgundian-born Scottish queen was the widow of James II and regent during the reign of the young James III. Margaret, desperate to do a deal, was ready to barter away Berwick and to cede Calais to Louis XI, the new king of France. However, Edward outmanoeuvred her by agreeing treaties with both countries, and Henry VI was forced to take refuge in Northumberland.

The new regime gradually extended its authority northwards. The Battle of Hexham in May 1464, at which several Lancastrian lords and knights were slain, was a major disaster for Henry's cause. He was captured in July 1465 and taken to the Tower of London, where he was held in comfortable captivity. He was probably quite content with his solitude. However, his misadventures were not over. In her exile in France, Margaret had found a new champion, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick,



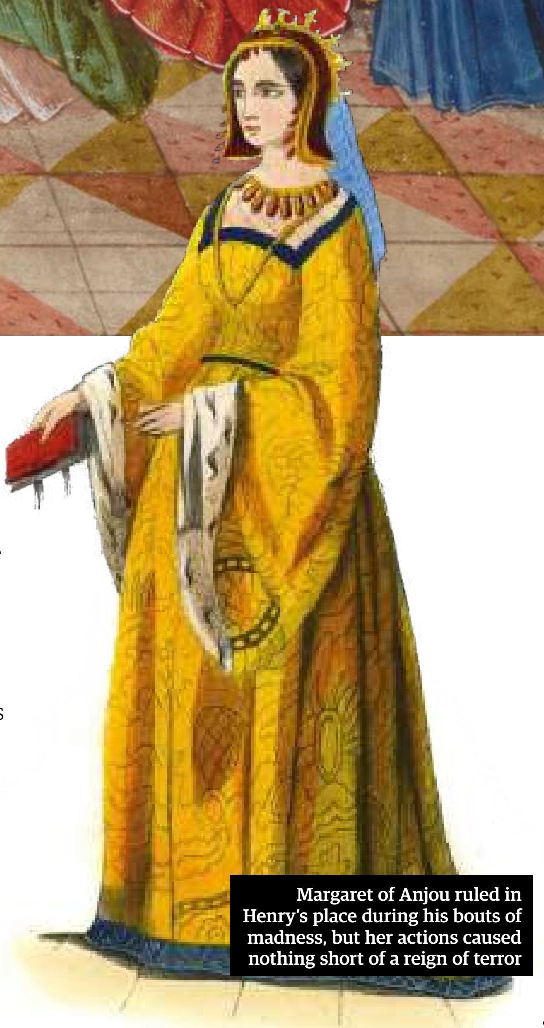
Henry was crowned king of France at Notre-Dame in Paris in response to Charles VII's coronation at Reims Cathedral

"Edward outmanoeuvred Margaret by agreeing treaties with both countries, and Henry VI was forced to take refuge in Northumberland"

a former friend of Edward's who had now turned against him. In October 1470, while Edward was busy suppressing a Lancastrian rising in the north, Warwick gained control of London, freed Henry VI and proclaimed his rule to be resumed (this was known as the 'Readeption' of Henry VI). Edward fled to Burgundy, where he gained the support of Duke Charles. He landed in Yorkshire in March 1471 at the head of an Anglo-Burgundian army. He defeated and killed Warwick in a battle at Barnet.

Margaret and Prince Edward had, meanwhile, landed in the West. They were busy rallying support in Wales and Gloucestershire when Edward confronted them at Tewkesbury on 4 May. Here the Lancastrian force was annihilated. Prince Edward was killed, and most of Margaret's noble supporters either died in battle or were executed immediately afterwards. Ten days later Edward re-entered his capital and, within hours, Henry was found dead in the Tower of London. Centuries later, examination of the body established that it had suffered severe head injuries.

Thus, this unhappy king made his escape from a burdensome life. Disastrous though his reign was, those who had cause to be grateful for his foundations at Eton, Oxford and Cambridge might reflect that 'Mad King Henry' left a better memorial than many other English monarchs.



Margaret of Anjou ruled in Henry's place during his bouts of madness, but her actions caused nothing short of a reign of terror

©Getty

1442-83

Edward IV

How the first Yorkist king endured war, rebellion and even deposition to secure the House of York on the English throne

Written by Jessica Leggett

The king couldn't believe his eyes. Waiting under a tree with her two sons by her side, a beautiful woman was waiting for an audience with him. They locked eyes as she begged for the return of her son's inheritance, taken from them following the death of her husband.

This was, according to legend, the first fateful meeting between King Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville. Their subsequent marriage would cause a scandalous sensation, contributing to decades of continued warfare over the throne of England.

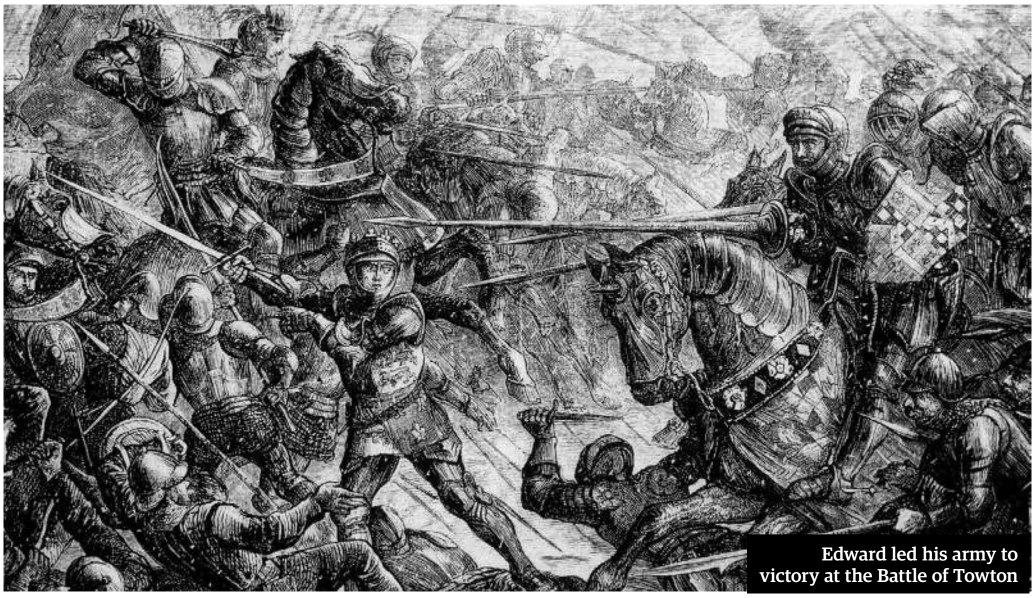
The first Yorkist king

Edward was just 18 years old when he assumed the leadership for the Yorkists in the Wars of the Roses. His father, Richard, Duke of York, was killed by the Lancastrians at the Battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460, along with Edward's younger brother, Edmund, Earl of Rutland. Just over a month later, Edward, now the head of his family, led his forces to victory over the Lancastrians at Mortimer's Cross before joining forces with his cousin, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. Warwick was a powerful man and had been a key ally of Edward's father - now he threw his weight behind his young cousin.

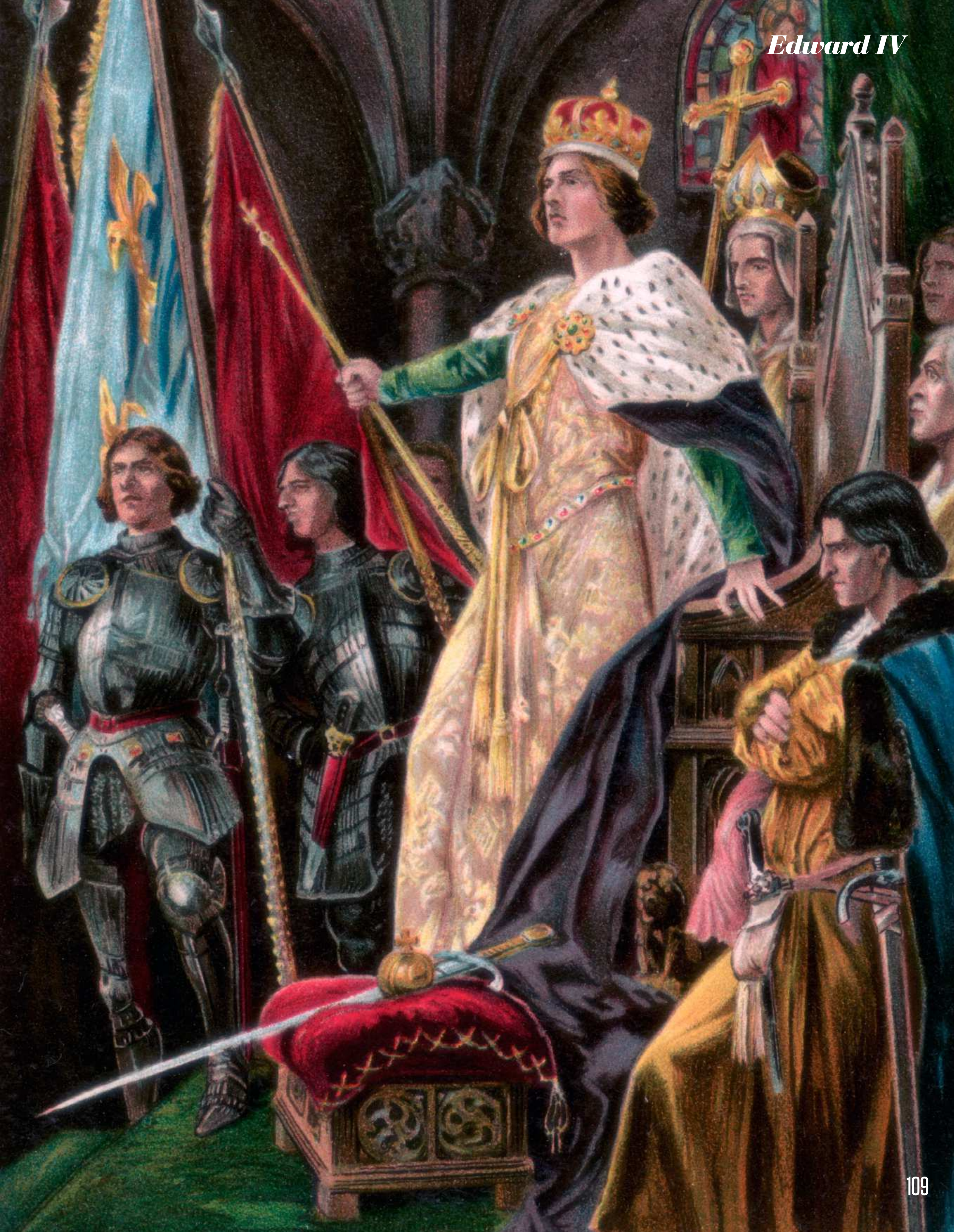
While Edward had tasted success, Warwick had suffered an initial setback at the hands of the Lancastrians at the Second Battle of St Albans, which took place on 17 February 1461. Not only was his army defeated, but Margaret of Anjou, England's formidable queen, had also recaptured her infirm husband, King Henry VI, from Yorkist clutches. He had been a prisoner of the enemy since he was taken at the Battle of Northampton the previous July and his return into Lancastrians hands bolstered their cause. Despite this, Edward was determined to gain the ultimate prize: he wanted to be king of England.

A month after his victory at Mortimer's Cross, Edward declared himself king in March 1461, the first from the House of York. He had a solid claim to the throne, as both of his parents had been descended from King Edward III. Just a few weeks later, on 29 March, Edward decisively defeated the Lancastrians at the Battle of Towton, forcing Henry, Margaret and their son into exile. Warwick headed north with his army to crush the remaining Lancastrian rebels, and Edward was officially crowned at Westminster Abbey on 28 June. King Henry VI had ascended the throne when he was just nine months old and required a regency government until he was 16.

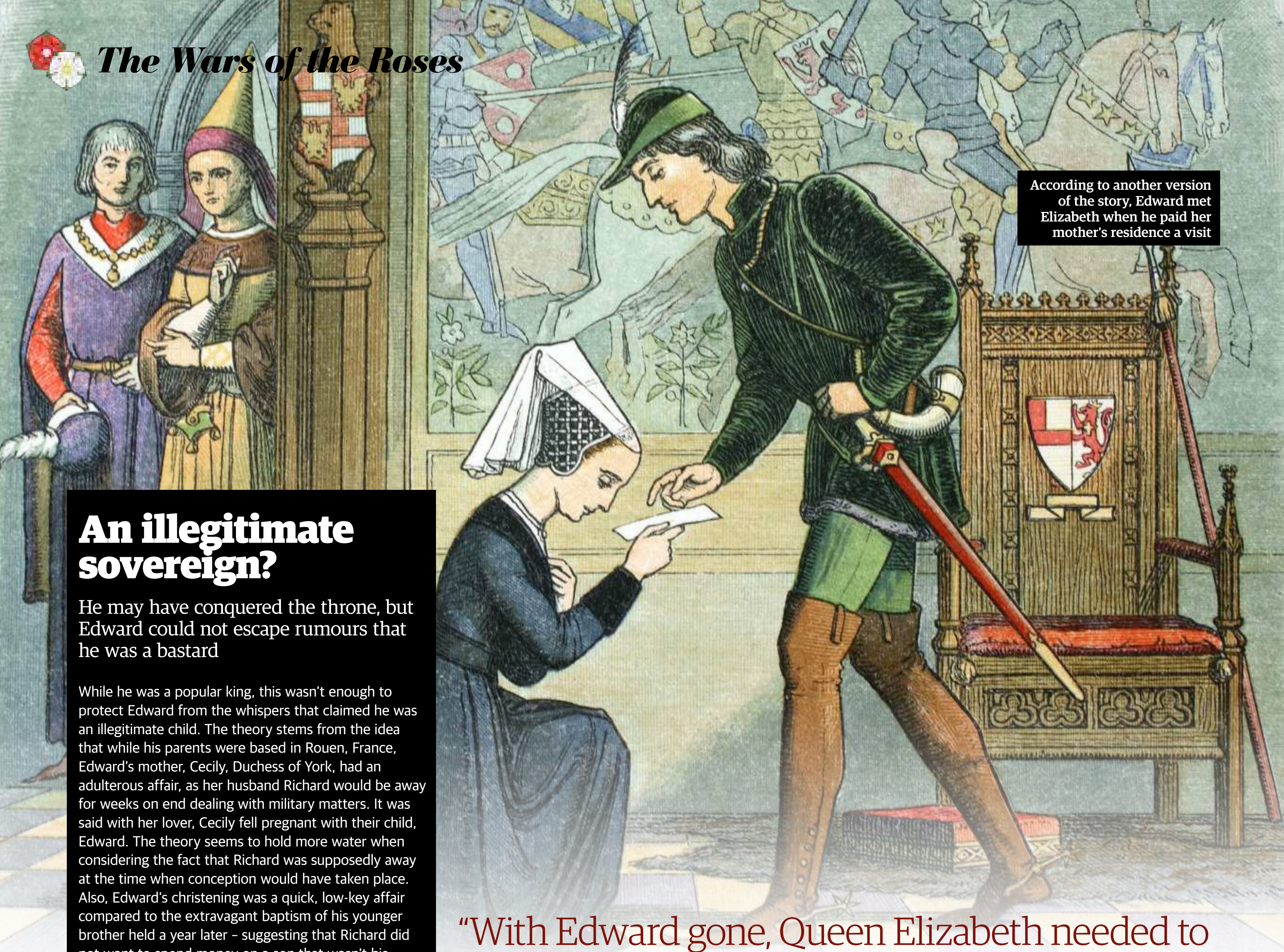
However, even after he reached his age of majority, Henry was dominated by his powerful advisors who easily controlled the weak-willed king, which was worsened by the fact that Henry was slowly succumbing to his mental illness. With this in mind, many people welcomed Edward as their new king and he proved popular among the public. He was



Edward led his army to victory at the Battle of Towton



Edward IV



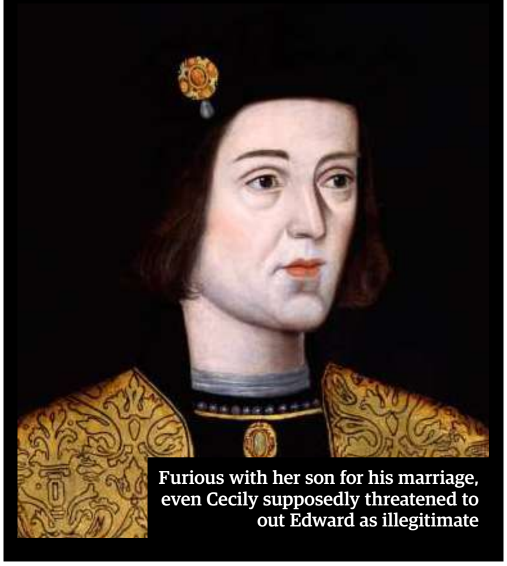
According to another version of the story, Edward met Elizabeth when he paid her mother's residence a visit

An illegitimate sovereign?

He may have conquered the throne, but Edward could not escape rumours that he was a bastard

While he was a popular king, this wasn't enough to protect Edward from the whispers that claimed he was an illegitimate child. The theory stems from the idea that while his parents were based in Rouen, France, Edward's mother, Cecily, Duchess of York, had an adulterous affair, as her husband Richard would be away for weeks on end dealing with military matters. It was said with her lover, Cecily fell pregnant with their child, Edward. The theory seems to hold more water when considering the fact that Richard was supposedly away at the time when conception would have taken place. Also, Edward's christening was a quick, low-key affair compared to the extravagant baptism of his younger brother held a year later – suggesting that Richard did not want to spend money on a son that wasn't his.

However, it was not unusual for baptisms to be low-key and rushed at a time when many babies struggled to survive longer than a few days, with parents anxious to make sure that their children had been christened. Also, the rumours starting surfacing around 1469 during the upheaval with Warwick, in an attempt to discredit the king – something that Edward's own brothers also did for their own political gain.



Furious with her son for his marriage, even Cecily supposedly threatened to out Edward as illegitimate

"With Edward gone, Queen Elizabeth needed to protect herself. She fled to Westminster Abbey with her children"

the whole package: healthy, young, tall, athletic and dashingly handsome, with the ability to charm all those around him.

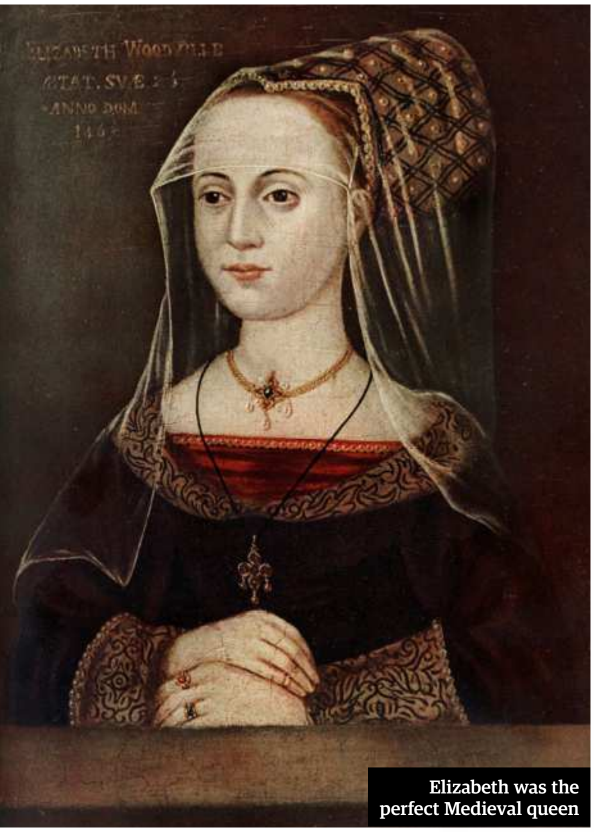
An English queen

As it turned out, Edward managed to charm his way right into trouble. The king of England was expected to marry a foreign bride, to forge alliances for his new kingdom as well as to gain a sizeable dowry to boost the royal coffers. But instead, Edward had become enamoured with a beautiful young widow, Elizabeth Woodville. Defying convention, Edward and Elizabeth secretly married in 1464, although the exact date and location still remain unknown. Aside from the happy couple, there were just three witnesses to the clandestine union, including Elizabeth's mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford.

When news of the marriage broke, scandalous cries erupted at court – no English king had married one of his own subjects since the Norman conquest. Elizabeth was far from the ideal English queen. Not only was she widowed, her deceased husband, Sir John Grey, had died at the Second Battle of St Albans, fighting for the Lancastrian cause. As a mother of two young boys, she was clearly not a virgin, an expectation for royal brides, and as a daughter of a knight, she was merely a commoner and not a princess, something that greatly upset Edward's privy council. Elizabeth had no money or diplomatic ties, bringing no advantages to her new role as queen.

To make matters worse, Warwick had been right in the middle of marriage negotiations with France. He had become the second most important man in England, besides the king himself, and he had not thrown his support behind Edward for no reason. He wanted to maintain control over the king, and he was blindsided and humiliated by Edward's marriage, which had ruined all of his efforts with France. It caused a rift between the two men, but Edward was not to be dissuaded from his new wife. On 26 May 1465, Elizabeth was crowned queen of England.

Edward's choice of bride may have surprised and upset those around him, but regardless the royal couple were happy together. Elizabeth presented herself as a charitable and pious queen and aside



Elizabeth was the perfect Medieval queen

from her two boys, she had another ten children by Edward, proving beyond doubt that she was fertile. Together, they created one of the most glittering courts in Europe, overcoming the obstacles they faced. Although Edward's eye, as well as his body, would wander, he risked a lot to make Elizabeth his queen, demonstrating his true affection for her.

While Edward celebrated his new marriage, he still faced repeated Lancastrian attempts of rebellion, led and encouraged by former Queen Margaret, who refused to give up without a fight. But Edward's troops continued to fight back and eventually, they recaptured Henry in 1465. Left with no choice, Margaret fled to France to seek protection from her cousin, King Louis XI. From the outside, it seemed Edward's kingdom was at peace – but internally, chaos was already brewing.

It was a normal aspect of a royal court to have different factions of people, either vying for the favour of the king or, in some cases, endearing themselves to his heir in preparation for the latter's reign. However, Elizabeth's presence changed the power at court in a completely different way. Queens, like kings, often had their favourites who they chose to patronise and promote. But as a native-born queen, Elizabeth was in a position to promote her own family in various ways.

She arranged advantageous marriages for her siblings with members of the aristocracy, while Edward bestowed her father and brothers with increasingly influential political positions. For example, her father, Richard Woodville, was given the title Earl Rivers in 1466, promoted to the position of Lord Treasurer the same year and finally made the constable of England in 1467. It was an extraordinary display of changing allegiances, which left a sour taste among those who remembered that the Woodvilles had once been loyal Lancastrians.

But Edward had his own motives for being so generous to his wife's family. He was aware of just how much control Warwick wielded and by allowing the rise of the Woodvilles, Edward had developed them into powerful rivals that his cousin could not suppress. He was essentially asserting his independence and surrounding himself with those who were loyal to him, rather than to Warwick – a tussle for power was at play.

From friend to foe

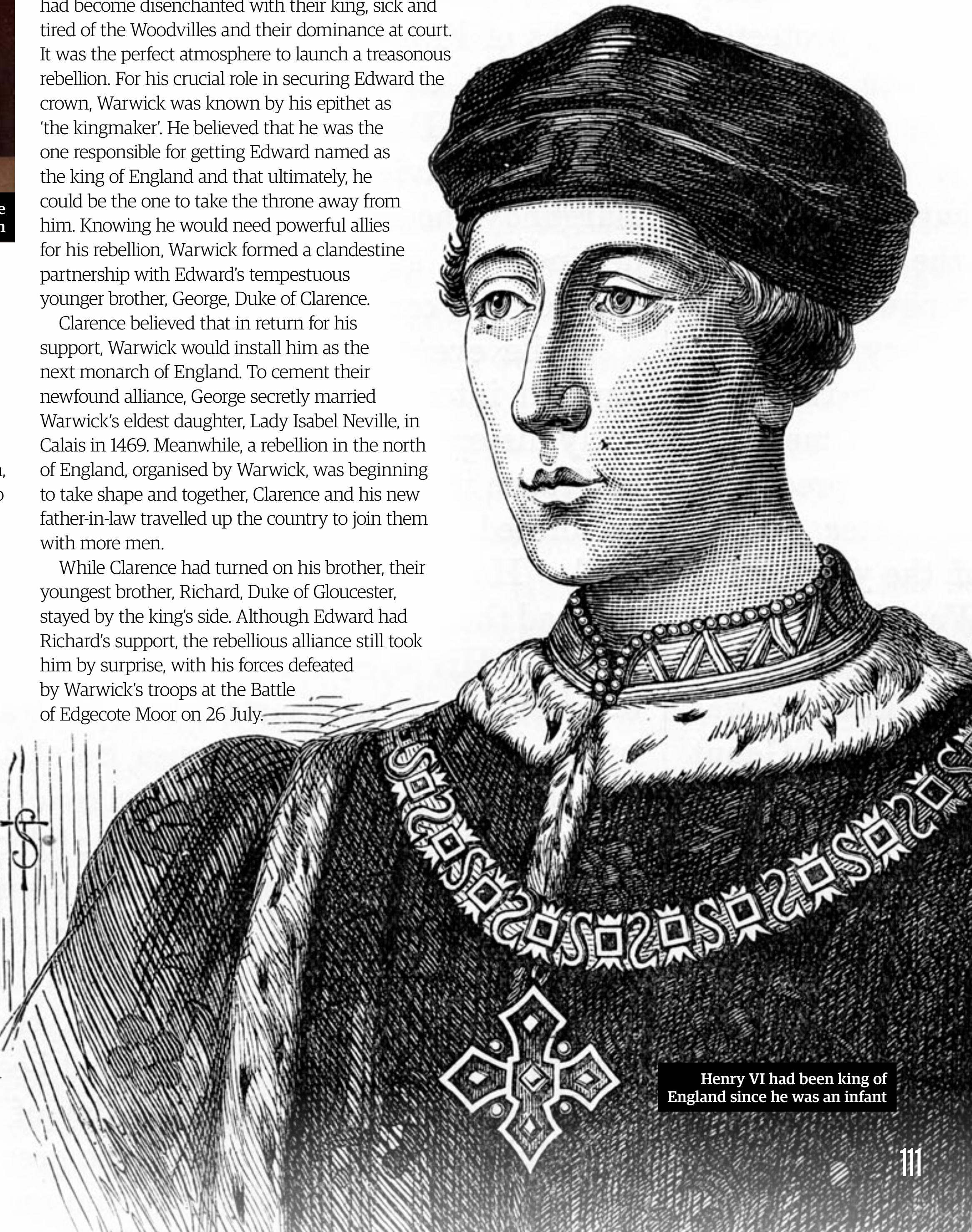
By 1469, the rising tension between Edward and Warwick had reached fever pitch. Rumours swirled that Warwick was becoming involved in Lancastrian plots against the king. At the same time, the nobility had become disenchanted with their king, sick and tired of the Woodvilles and their dominance at court. It was the perfect atmosphere to launch a treasonous rebellion. For his crucial role in securing Edward the crown, Warwick was known by his epithet as 'the kingmaker'. He believed that he was the one responsible for getting Edward named as the king of England and that ultimately, he could be the one to take the throne away from him. Knowing he would need powerful allies for his rebellion, Warwick formed a clandestine partnership with Edward's tempestuous younger brother, George, Duke of Clarence.

Clarence believed that in return for his support, Warwick would install him as the next monarch of England. To cement their newfound alliance, George secretly married Warwick's eldest daughter, Lady Isabel Neville, in Calais in 1469. Meanwhile, a rebellion in the north of England, organised by Warwick, was beginning to take shape and together, Clarence and his new father-in-law travelled up the country to join them with more men.

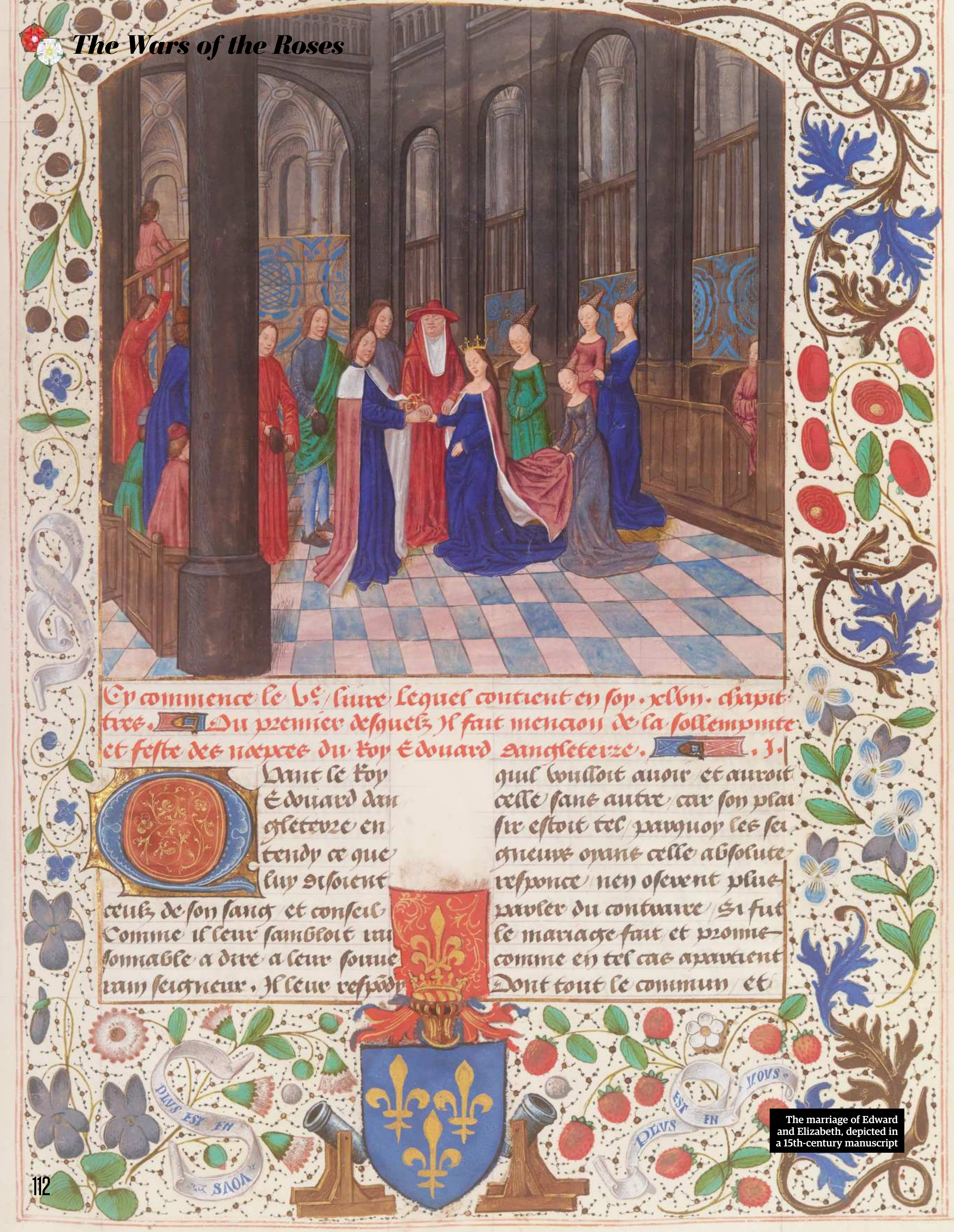
While Clarence had turned on his brother, their youngest brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, stayed by the king's side. Although Edward had Richard's support, the rebellious alliance still took him by surprise, with his forces defeated by Warwick's troops at the Battle of Edgecote Moor on 26 July. Backed into a corner, it was said the king promised to distance himself from the Woodville family – but it was already too late. Earl Rivers and his son, Sir John Woodville, were captured by Lancastrian troops and after a sham trial, they were beheaded on 12 August 1469.

In the meantime, Warwick initially imprisoned King Edward, housing him at Warwick Castle before relocating him north to Middleham Castle. When he realised the queen and her family would not submit to his influence, Warwick attempted to get rid of Jacquetta by accusing her of witchcraft. His efforts, however, were in vain, weakening his relationship with the king even further.

It was obvious that ruling without the king was easier said than done. The nobility made have been frustrated with the Woodvilles but that didn't mean they were willing to accept Warwick's authority



Henry VI had been king of England since he was an infant



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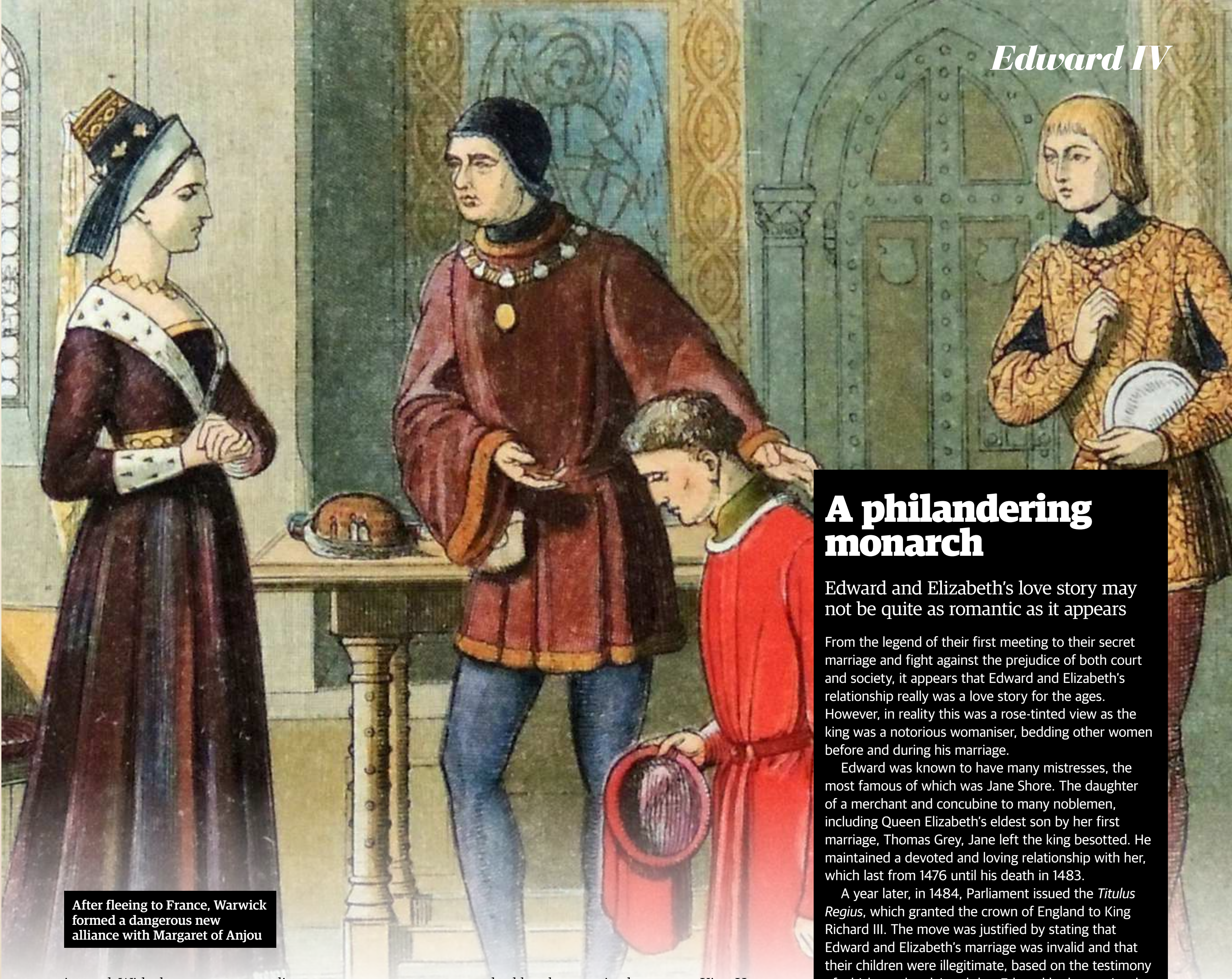
The marriage of Edward and Elizabeth, depicted in a 15th-century manuscript



After fleeing to France, Warwick formed a dangerous new alliance with Margaret of Anjou

instead. With the country struggling to manage without its king, Warwick was forced to release Edward in September.

Edward had hoped to reconcile with both Warwick and George, and for a few months, there was an uneasy peace. But soon enough, the men soon raised another rebellion against the king, only for their plan to be revealed to Edward. With their uprising defeated and realising they were no longer safe, Warwick and Clarence fled to France in May 1470 – but this would be far from the last time that Edward would hear from them.

A rebellious return

Licking his wounds, Warwick decided his best opportunity to depose Edward would be to form an alliance with the former queen, Margaret of Anjou. It was an alliance that at one time he would have deemed unthinkable, but Warwick knew he had no other options. He reached out to Margaret through King Louis, who hoped to stir up trouble in England by supporting the Lancastrian cause.

Margaret had spent the last five years waiting in exile for her opportunity to regain to English throne for her husband and son. When Warwick approached her, he promised to restore King Henry VI to his rightful place. However, the queen was a shrewd woman and she was not willing to blindly trust Warwick, the man responsible for her current, sorry state. Margaret insisted that Warwick return to England by himself to take on Edward. If he succeeded in deposing his cousin, she would gladly follow him with her armies. Warwick agreed and to make their alliance official, he betrothed his youngest daughter, Anne, to Margaret's son, Prince Edward. Returning to England in September 1470 to fulfil his end of this bargain, Warwick's arrival took the king by surprise once again.

Supporters flocked to Warwick's cause while his brother, Lord Montagu, also joined him in his rebellion against the king. With a powerful army and great influence in the north, Montagu had not supported his brother during his first rebellion against the king. But in retaliation for what had happened, Edward had stripped Montagu of the earldom of Northumberland, leaving him infuriated. Montagu turned against the king and with his forces in the north and Warwick arriving from the south, Edward found himself surrounded by enemies. The odds were now stacked against him.

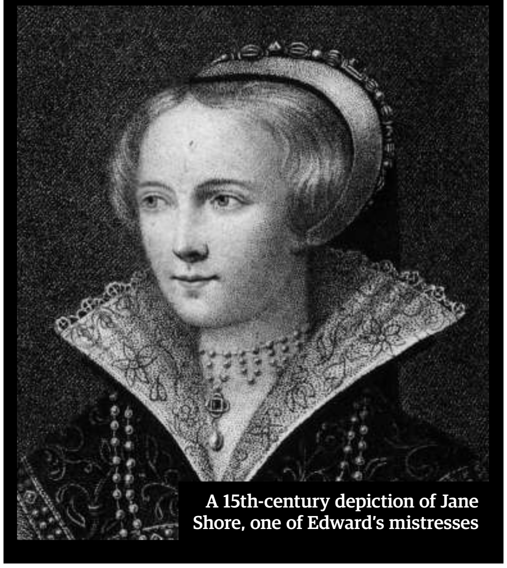
A philandering monarch

Edward and Elizabeth's love story may not be quite as romantic as it appears

From the legend of their first meeting to their secret marriage and fight against the prejudice of both court and society, it appears that Edward and Elizabeth's relationship really was a love story for the ages. However, in reality this was a rose-tinted view as the king was a notorious womaniser, bedding other women before and during his marriage.

Edward was known to have many mistresses, the most famous of which was Jane Shore. The daughter of a merchant and concubine to many noblemen, including Queen Elizabeth's eldest son by her first marriage, Thomas Grey, Jane left the king besotted. He maintained a devoted and loving relationship with her, which last from 1476 until his death in 1483.

A year later, in 1484, Parliament issued the *Titulus Regius*, which granted the crown of England to King Richard III. The move was justified by stating that Edward and Elizabeth's marriage was invalid and that their children were illegitimate, based on the testimony of a bishop who claimed that Edward had a previously contracted marriage to Lady Eleanor Butlet, née Talbot. Whether this was indeed true is still hotly contested to this day, although Edward would allegedly seduce women by promising them something in return – and this case, it was marriage.



A 15th-century depiction of Jane Shore, one of Edward's mistresses

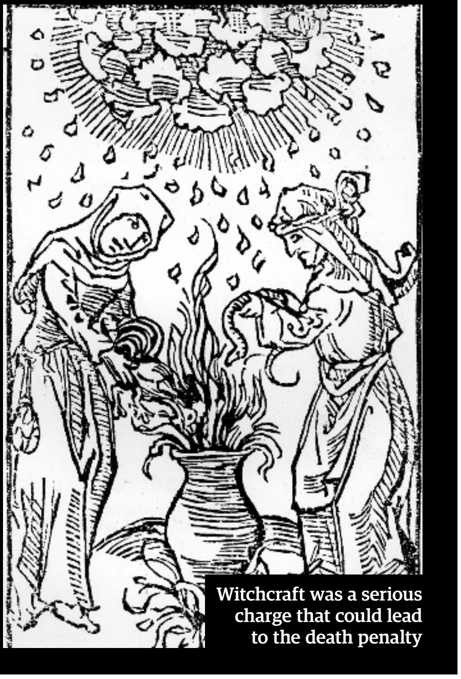
Warwick's witch hunt

How far was Warwick willing to go to break the hold of the Woodvilles?

In Medieval England, accusations of witchcraft were a common way to discredit women, and indeed get rid of them. Therefore, it is unsurprising that when allegations were brought against Queen Elizabeth's mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, in 1469 by one of his followers, that Warwick tried to remove her once and for all.

The charges could not have come at a worse time for Jacquetta. Still grieving at the loss of her husband and son at the hands of Warwick and his men, she could not rely on the protection of the king, who had been imprisoned. On top of this, so-called evidence had been produced: images made from lead, supposedly used by Jacquetta in her sorcery. Faced with a trial, Jacquetta took matters into her own hands. Refusing to back down, she wrote to the mayor and the alderman of London for their support in return for a previous favour she had given them. They agreed to help her but the case quickly collapsed anyway once the king had been released from Warwick's custody.

His council cleared Jacquetta of the charges and Warwick's effort to get rid of her had failed. Although declared innocent, the accusations would later be resurfaced by King Richard III in 1484, when his parliament claimed that Jacquetta had conspired with her daughter to bewitch and seduce the king into marriage – giving him a reason to declare Edward's marriage and heirs illegitimate.



Witchcraft was a serious charge that could lead to the death penalty

Realising he didn't have the men to defeat Warwick and left with no other choice, Edward fled to Flanders with his brother, Richard. The Kingmaker came through with his promise to Margaret, restoring King Henry VI to the throne on 3 October 1470. Unlike last time, Warwick now finally had a king he could effectively control, wielding the real power behind the scenes.

With Edward gone, Queen Elizabeth needed to protect herself. She fled to Westminster Abbey with her children to seek sanctuary, knowing Warwick could not touch her in a place of worship. Heavily pregnant at the time, Elizabeth gave birth to her first son, Prince Edward, in November. Although her husband was no longer the king, the arrival of a male heir meant that if he was to be restored, Edward would have a legitimate heir to succeed him.

Pleased that Warwick had delivered on his promise, Margaret oversaw the marriage between Anne and Prince Edward that December, before organising her troops out to return to England. However, Warwick's luck was not to last. In return for King Louis's support, he declared war on Burgundy along with France, angering the Burgundian ruler, Charles the Bold. To get even, Charles provided Edward with troops he needed to take back the English throne.

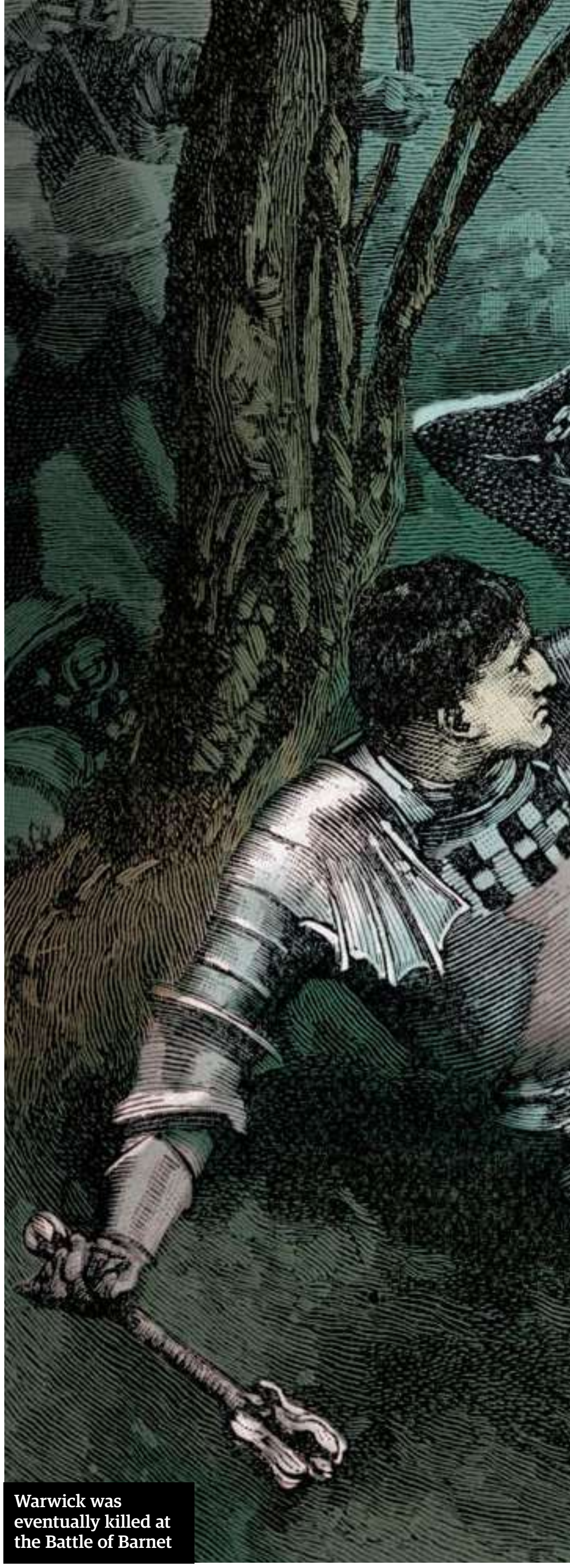
A final defeat

With his new army, Edward landed back on English soil with Richard in March 1471, six months after he was deposed. He made his way to York and after declaring that his only wish was to reclaim his dukedom, the city opened its gates to him. As he made his way south towards London, the number of Edward's supporters greatly increased. Even Clarence, having realised Warwick would never make him king, as well as the fact that being the king's brother came with a number of benefits, had switched his allegiance back to Edward. Armed and ready, Edward was coming for his former ally. Warwick desperately needed Margaret and her army to arrive, but as circumstance would have it, bad weather prevented her from crossing the Channel.

Meanwhile, Edward had managed to enter London unopposed and had seized a mentally ill Henry, taking him prisoner. Warwick had run out of time and options – he would have to face Edward without Margaret's reinforcements. The two former friends met on the battlefield on 14 April 1471. Remembered as the Battle of Barnet, it was a complete disaster for the Lancastrians and their poorly organised army. Knowing defeat was imminent, Warwick tried to flee the field, but he was struck from his horse and killed. After two years of dissent and chaos, Edward had finally prevailed over his rebellious cousin.

As for Margaret, she landed on English soil only to receive news of the Lancastrian defeat and Warwick's demise. She remained defiant, refusing to lose the greatest opportunity she had been given to take back the crown of England. Taking control of the Lancastrian army herself, she faced the Yorkist army for one last showdown at the Battle of Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471.

For all of her determination, Margaret's efforts were ultimately in vain as the Lancastrians were decisively defeated at Tewkesbury, with the vanguard of the Yorkists led by Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Still, this was not the worst news that Margaret received – her beloved son and heir, Prince Edward, had been killed. He had been her purpose for fighting the Yorkists and without him, Margaret had nobody left to fight for. She was taken prisoner and imprisoned in the Tower of London with her infirm husband, who died less than two weeks later, most likely assassinated under Edward's orders.



Warwick was eventually killed at the Battle of Barnet

The last years

With the destruction of the Lancastrians, the rest of Edward's reign was relatively peaceful, restoring law and order to the kingdom after so many turbulent years. He did declare war on France in June 1475 but failed to get the support from the Burgundians he

hoped for. Edward was forced to negotiate a truce, but it turned out to be a success, as he secured a large annual income from the French.

To improve royal authority and presence in the north of England, Edward appointed Richard as the first Lord President of the Council of the North in 1472. Richard would control the north for the rest of Edward's reign, supposedly becoming a popular figure in York. It was also Richard who led Edward's invasion of Scotland in 1483 in support of a rival claimant, the duke of Albany, against the Scottish ruler, King James III. Although Richard's invasion was successful, Albany eventually backed away from his agreement with Edward, forcing the English to withdraw from Scotland.

While Richard proved to be a loyal brother, the same could not be said for Clarence, who failed to let go of his rebellious ways. Found guilty of treason for plotting against his brother, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London and executed on 18 February 1478 - according to legend, he was drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine. Edward and Elizabeth were married for almost two decades and in 1473, they had another son, a spare to the heir. But years of war and conflict had taken its toll on the king, who was a far cry from the young and sprightly man that Elizabeth had married. He suffered from increasingly ill health and by Easter 1483, it was clear Edward was dying. With his eldest son and heir, Prince Edward, still a minor, King Edward added codicils to his will, naming his younger brother, Richard, as Lord Protector on behalf of the young boy.

On 9 April 1483, Edward passed away at Windsor Castle. Despite the blood, sweat and tears he had poured into founding and establishing his dynasty, the Yorks would only remain on the throne for another two years, ended by the deposition of Richard III in 1485. However, Edward's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, became a queen of England through her marriage to the Lancastrian claimant Henry Tudor at the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses. His dynasty may have ended in the same, way it began, but Edward's bloodline has continued on the English throne for centuries - making him the ancestor of Queen Elizabeth II.

MURDER IN THE TOWER

When two young princes disappeared more than 500 years ago, it sparked one of the most controversial and debated murder mysteries in history

"The search for the culprit has baffled and intrigued scholars for centuries"

It was a balmy summer's night in the dark, twisting corridors of the Tower of London as Edward and Richard, the two young sons of York, slept soundly. A sob of silver moonlight fell upon their golden hair from a high window and all was silent. Fast asleep in bed, their hands clutching each other for comfort, they barely stirred as the door opened with a creak.

A figure slipped through the entrance. Stepping lightly, he swept up a feather pillow and slowly approached the beds before lunging forward, firmly holding the pillow over the older boy's face until his breathing stopped. Then he moved to the younger child. In a few minutes the deed was done, and the figure slunk back into the darkness and out of sight.

This story entered the nation's consciousness in late 1483, and it was retold over and over until it was accepted as fact. It was recounted by respected historians and made popular and immortalised by Shakespeare's play *Richard III*. But where did this rumour start? Was it really King Richard who masterminded such an atrocious crime? And how did the death of these two young children really benefit anyone?

The succession to the English throne has never been as precarious and uncertain as in the 15th century. Since 1154, the English crown had belonged to the Plantagenets, but when Edward III died in 1377, he left behind a series of sons that he had gifted with dukedoms. This created a breed of aristocrats who all had distant claims to the throne. Henry IV, the son of the fourth son of Edward III, deposed and most likely murdered his way to the top and formed the House of Lancaster, as well as making a host of enemies in the process. The line seemed to be stable but thanks to the inefficiency of his grandson, Henry VI, the conflict known as the Wars of the Roses broke out. It led to the eventual succession of the first Yorkist king, Edward IV, but his hold on throne was anything but secure.

Despite the instability and political turmoil, Edward IV was a stronger ruler than his predecessor and managed to establish some order in England. But this all came crashing down in 1483 when he died suddenly, leaving his 12-year-old son, Edward, as king. This wasn't an unprecedented move – children had 'ruled' before, usually through the guidance of regents – but it certainly wasn't ideal with so many would-be heirs snapping at his heels. Edward V was an independent boy; he was mature beyond his years and he had already been preparing to be king, but he was a child in a man's world, and it did not take long for people to take advantage of his fragile position.

While awaiting his coronation ceremony in the Tower of London with his younger brother, Richard of Shrewsbury, the throne was torn from beneath Edward before he even had a chance to sit on it. His father's marriage to his mother was ruled invalid as he had allegedly been pre-contracted to another beforehand, and their children, including young Edward, were declared illegitimate. Bastards were not judged worthy of the throne, so the crown fell into the hands of the next legitimate heir, his uncle – Richard III.

From this point on, the fate of the princes fades into myth and legend. Their last reported sighting was in late summer 1483, and from then the records seem to run dry. They were certainly never seen again in public, and soon rumours began to surface that the young boys had been murdered in the Tower. There was no evidence that the princes had been killed, save their disappearance, but the search for the culprit has baffled and intrigued scholars for more than 500 years.

In 1674, a wooden box containing two small human skeletons was discovered near the White Tower, the suspected site of the boys' burial. Believed to be the remains of the princes, the bones were buried in Westminster Abbey under the order of Charles II. However, these bones have not yet been subject to DNA analysis, and many experts don't believe they belong to the princes at all.

The problem with identifying the children's 'killer' is the era in which the murder supposedly occurred. It was a time when murder and treason were rampant and ambitions were sky high. There is not just one, but an array of possible suspects, all with their own motives for committing the crime. Contemporary accounts are unreliable due to the writer's own political alliances, and all of them contradict other versions of events.

Shakespeare's play popularised the figure of Richard III as a scheming, heartless hunchback, willing to murder anyone to secure his throne, but just how accurate is this? Richard had his reasons to do away with the boys, but so did a host of others, and even more people had reason to drag Richard's name through the mud.

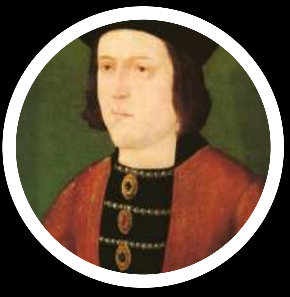
Is the common belief that Richard is responsible simply encouraging a vicious rumour created by his enemies some 500 years ago?

Countdown to murder

The final movements before the princes' disappearance

9 April 1483

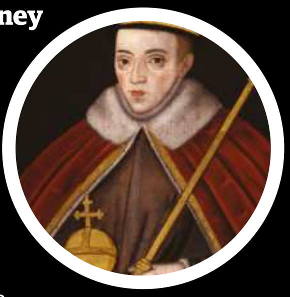
A king dies



After suffering from a short illness, Edward IV dies. The reason for his death is a mystery, with rumours of a possible poisoning as well as typhoid considered.

24 April 1483

The last journey



His son Edward V and the royal party leave their home at Ludlow to travel to London for his coronation.

4 May 1483

A royal entrance

Edward enters the capital with his uncle, Richard of Gloucester. They are greeted by the mayor and hundreds of citizens.

19 May 1483

Final residence

Edward is moved into the Tower of London, which is the usual place for kings to stay prior to a coronation.

16 June 1483

The brothers reunite

After previously being held with his mother and half-siblings in sanctuary in Westminster, Richard joins his brother at the request of the duke of Gloucester.

22 June 1483

A new king

Theologian Ralph Shaa preaches a sermon that declares all of Edward IV's children illegitimate. Three days later, Richard is declared king.

End of the summer

Last sighting

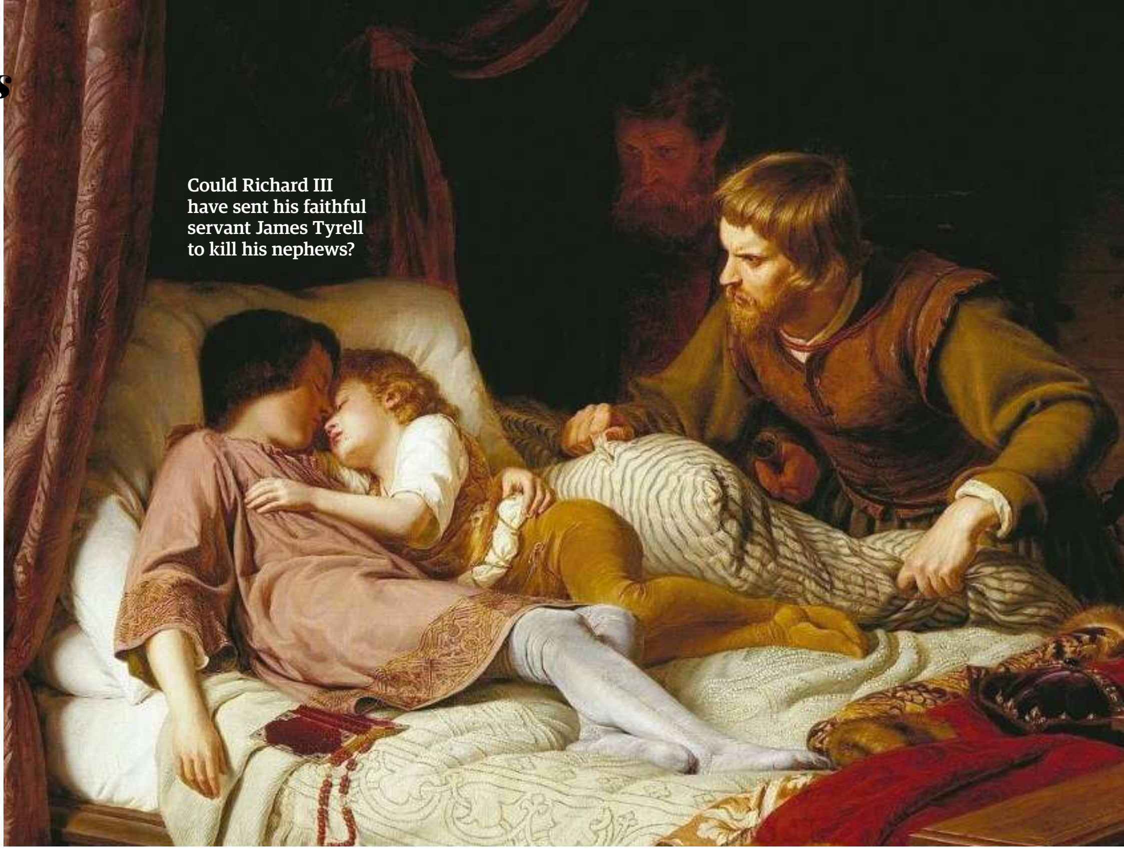
The children are withdrawn to the inner apartments of the Tower and are seen less and less. By the end of summer, they are presumed dead.

RICHARD III
RICHARD III

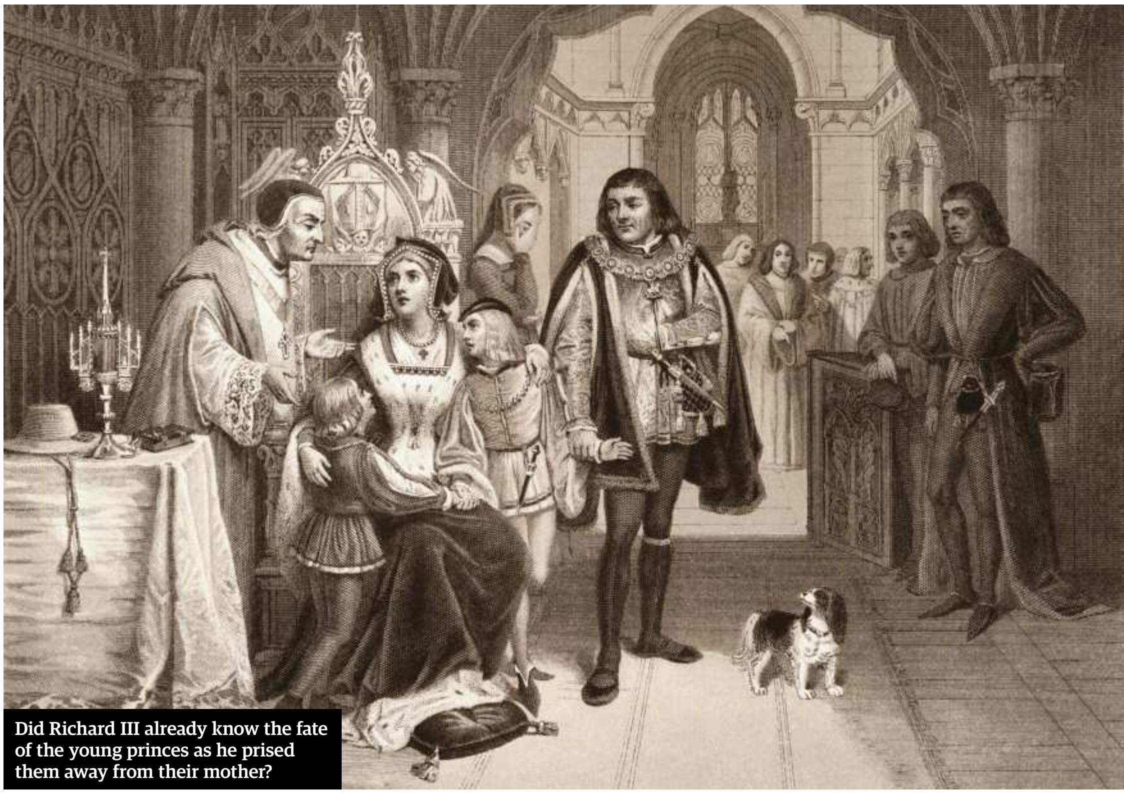
Suspect 01

Richard III

Motive: Secure his hold on the throne
Opportunity: Full control of and access to the Tower of London



Could Richard III have sent his faithful servant James Tyrell to kill his nephews?



Did Richard III already know the fate of the young princes as he prised them away from their mother?

The reasons why Richard would murder his nephews seem rather straightforward. After serving his brother loyally for years, upon his death, the jealous and ambitious Richard seized the opportunity to claim the throne as his own. He first did this by dismissing, arresting and eventually murdering many of the ministers appointed to his nephew, Edward V, claiming that he did so for his protection. He then placed Edward and his brother in the Tower and delayed the coronation. Two weeks later, the princes were declared illegitimate and Richard ascended the throne. Although they had been disenfranchised, keeping the boys alive when they had such a strong claim was too dangerous, so he had them murdered.

If the events were this clear-cut, there would be no question as to who was responsible, but unfortunately they are not. Strictly speaking, Richard didn't take the throne illegally – he was asked to by a parliamentary committee. The only part played by Richard in the bill that declared the boys illegitimate, *Titulus Regius*, was accepting it, perhaps indicating that Richard instead was a man who had no choice but to accept his role of king, or else the country would face a crisis of royal succession.

If Richard did indeed murder the princes to secure his own hold on the throne, then why did he not publicise their deaths? He could easily have claimed they died of illness but he did nothing of the sort. When faced with the vicious rumours that threatened to destroy his reign and certainly lessened the public's support of his claim, he avoided even acknowledging the boys' disappearance. If his motive was to strengthen his grip on the throne, he failed to take advantage of the opportunity he created.

Most crucially, there is no solid evidence that the princes were murdered at all. If people can disappear in the modern day, then it is certainly likely that they could in the 15th century. It is entirely possible that Richard had the boys transported out of the country, and this is the reason why he was unable to easily present them when he faced accusations of their murder. It would also explain the uncertainty that surrounded their fate and the lack of evidence.

For Richard to be innocent, at least one other man had to have been lying – Sir James Tyrell. Tyrell was a loyal servant of Richard III and was bestowed with an array of titles and grants once he was in power. When Henry VII was crowned, Tyrell was initially pardoned for being a supporter of Richard, but in 1501 he was arrested for treason and executed.

According to Thomas More, upon 'examination', Tyrell admitted that he had murdered the princes. Although we only have More's word for this, the fact that both King Henry and his wife attended Tyrell's trial – a very unusual event – indicates that Tyrell did in fact make this confession. Whether this was forced by torture or was actually true, we may never know – but it had huge implications for his master, Richard, firmly placing the murders at his feet for the next 500 years.

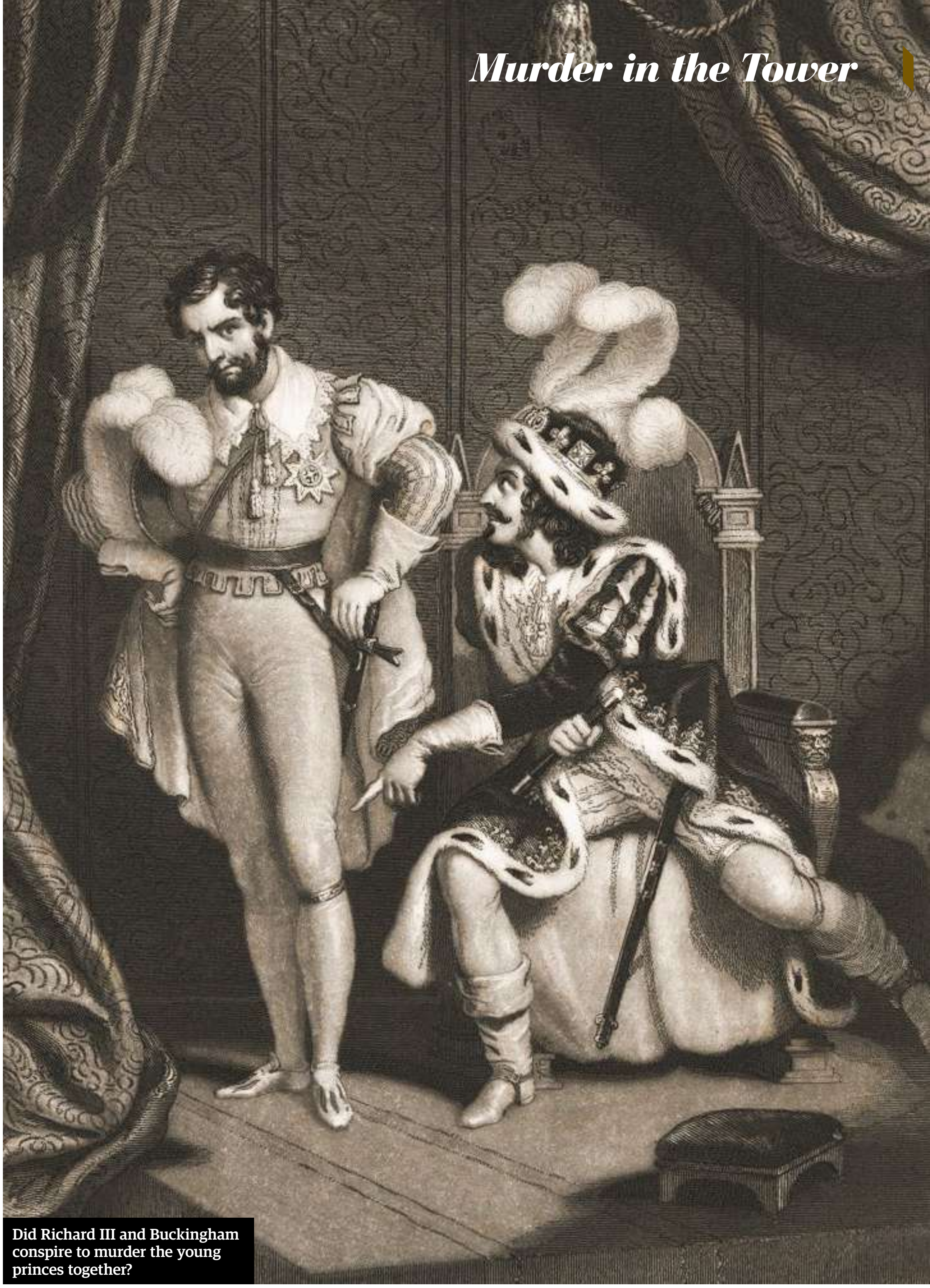
HENRY STAFFORD
HENRY STAFFORD

Suspect 02

Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham

Motive: To claim the throne along with his lost inheritance

Opportunity: Only possible while under Richard's orders or by forced entry



Did Richard III and Buckingham conspire to murder the young princes together?

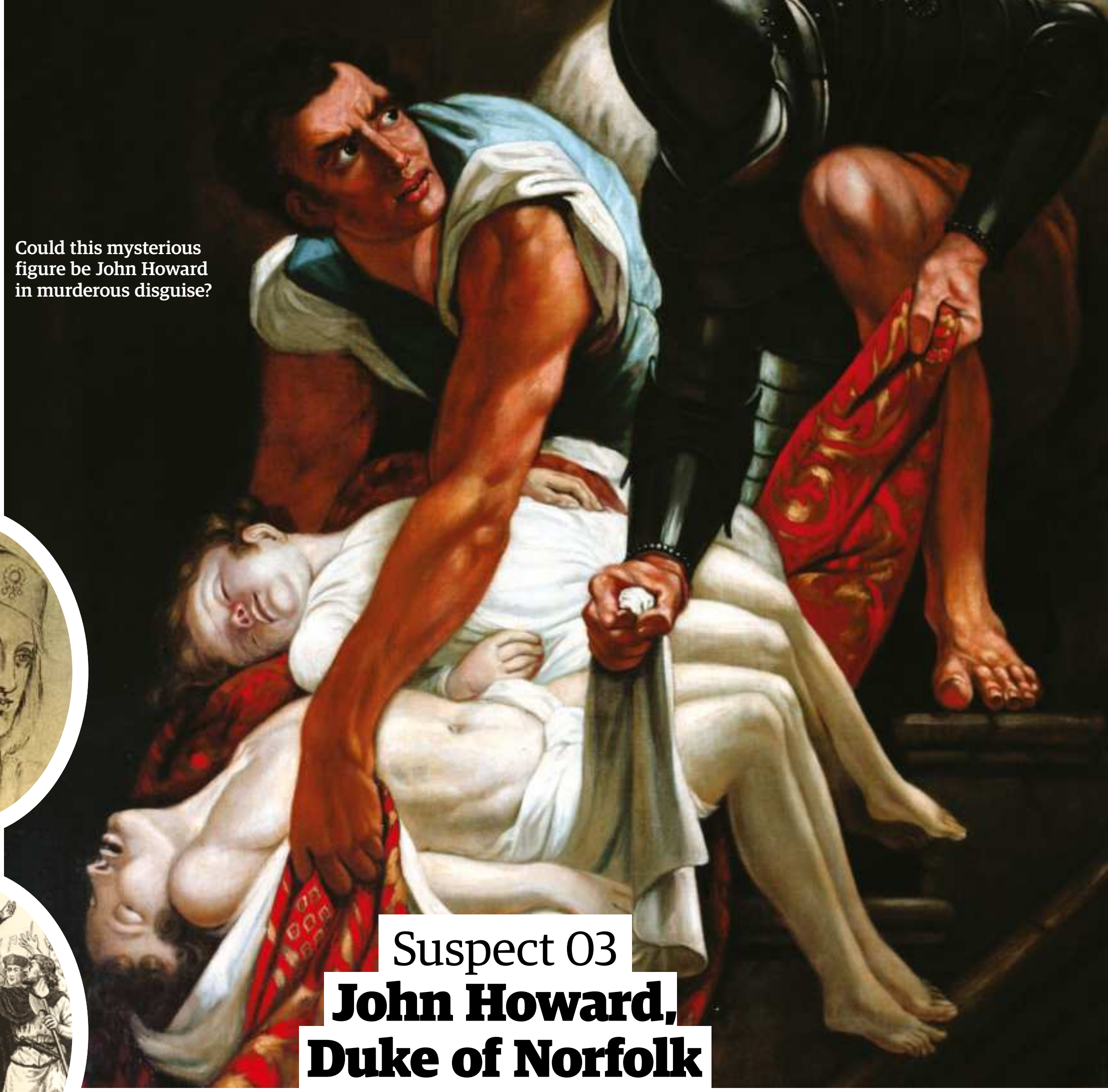
After Richard III, the duke of Buckingham, Henry Stafford, is one of the earliest suspects for the murder. He had multiple links to the throne but these were through the daughters of younger sons, making the chances of him claiming the crown very slim indeed. Despite his family fighting for the House of Lancaster in the Wars of the Roses, he went on to become the ward of Elizabeth Woodville, the wife of Edward IV. He was married to her sister, but this was not a happy union; he considered it an insult to be married to a woman of lower class and resented the Woodvilles from that point onwards. When Richard took guardianship of the young Edward, Buckingham was by his side. But what exactly did the duke have to gain from the princes' deaths?

One suggested motive is Buckingham's interest in the Bohun estate - worth some £1,100 annually. He had inherited the property from his great-great-grandmother Eleanor de Bohun, but Eleanor, and therefore Buckingham, only received half of the estate. Her sister inherited the other half and ended up marrying Henry IV. When Edward IV took the crown, the estate became crown property but Buckingham insisted it belonged to him. This desire to reclaim his estate certainly explains why Buckingham supported Richard's ascension, but not why he might have killed the princes, for the simple fact that Richard granted him his inheritance in July 1483, pending parliamentary approval.

Instead, a very common motive for murder is given to Buckingham's actions: ambition. He had acted as kingmaker for Richard, aligning with him the moment he came into power and guiding his hand to the throne. He was as entangled in the events that led the children to their deathbeds as Richard himself. He held Richard's train and staff on his coronation, perhaps thinking that he may stand in that position soon enough. In order to achieve this, he placed Richard on the throne and killed the princes either to begin a vicious rumour or to eliminate his first stumbling block to the crown. In autumn 1483, he unleashed an uprising against Richard that would eventually lead to their deaths.

Many have claimed that if he didn't act alone, Buckingham killed the princes on behalf of Richard, and the rebellion was a result of his disillusionment with his new king. It is impossible to prove whether Buckingham was acting out of guilt, ambition or malice when he led his rebellion. However, it seems peculiar that a man who knew the princes were dead would lead a rebellion demanding they be reinstated on the throne.

It was the rumours of their deaths that caused Buckingham to be replaced by Henry Tudor as leader of the rebellion. Perhaps strangest of all is the fact that when Buckingham was captured and tried, Richard did not accuse him of murdering the princes. With Buckingham at his mercy, it would have been the perfect time to implicate him for the murders he was aware he committed, clearing his own name in the process. But he did not.



Could this mysterious figure be John Howard in murderous disguise?

Suspect 03

John Howard, Duke of Norfolk

Motive: To claim his rightful inheritance
Opportunity: Constable of the Tower at the time

Howard was yet another member of the aristocracy who was descended from royalty: Edward I on his mother's side and King John on his father's. He was a staunch supporter of the House of York and was knighted by King Edward IV. He slowly made his way up the ranks, even carrying the crown to Richard III at his coronation. Howard's support of Richard alone isn't enough to accuse him of murder, but the benefits he apparently reaped because of his ascension certainly are. Just two days into Richard's reign, Howard received the lands and titles held by Richard of Shrewsbury. These lands, the 'Mowbray inheritance', had been given to Richard as 'compensation' after the death of his betrothed. This meant Howard was denied his inheritance and had not been compensated at all for this loss. Adding to this theory is the fact that it was Howard who encouraged placing Richard in the Tower with his brother – the Tower he was constable of. He was also devoted to Richard III, even dying on the same field as his king. If he had not acted alone to secure his fortunes, it is not impossible to believe that he acted alongside the king – agreeing to do away with the boys as both a favour and a means to claim what was rightfully his.

> "It is not impossible to believe that he acted alongside the king"

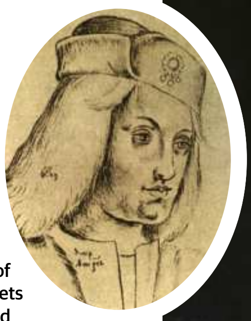
It seems Howard had both the means and the motive to commit the act, but this theory actually falls apart under closer scrutiny. Howard was not the all-powerful constable of the Tower – he held the second reversion of the post, making it unlikely that he could do as he wished there. In this case, we have to believe that Richard allowed Howard access to the Tower, but in reality their friendship was not as great as it seemed. It is a lot more likely that Howard's commitment was to the House of York, which had helped him ascend the social and political ladder, rather than to Richard himself. Such loyalty to a House at this time was a remarkable thing, and it is a little cynical to assume its source was shared blame for murder. Most damning of all is his motive. If he did indeed wish to claim his lands and titles, he would have only had to kill the current owner – Richard of Shrewsbury.

Why, then, would he also kill Edward V? The entire argument falls apart if we consider Howard only had 12 days to do away with them – the time between Richard's arrival at the Tower and when Howard was granted his estate. But both princes were reportedly seen after this date. Considering he had his title when they were seen alive, Howard really had no reason to kill them.

Pretenders of the throne

The princes' presumed murders didn't stop people coming forward claiming to be them

Perkin Warbeck

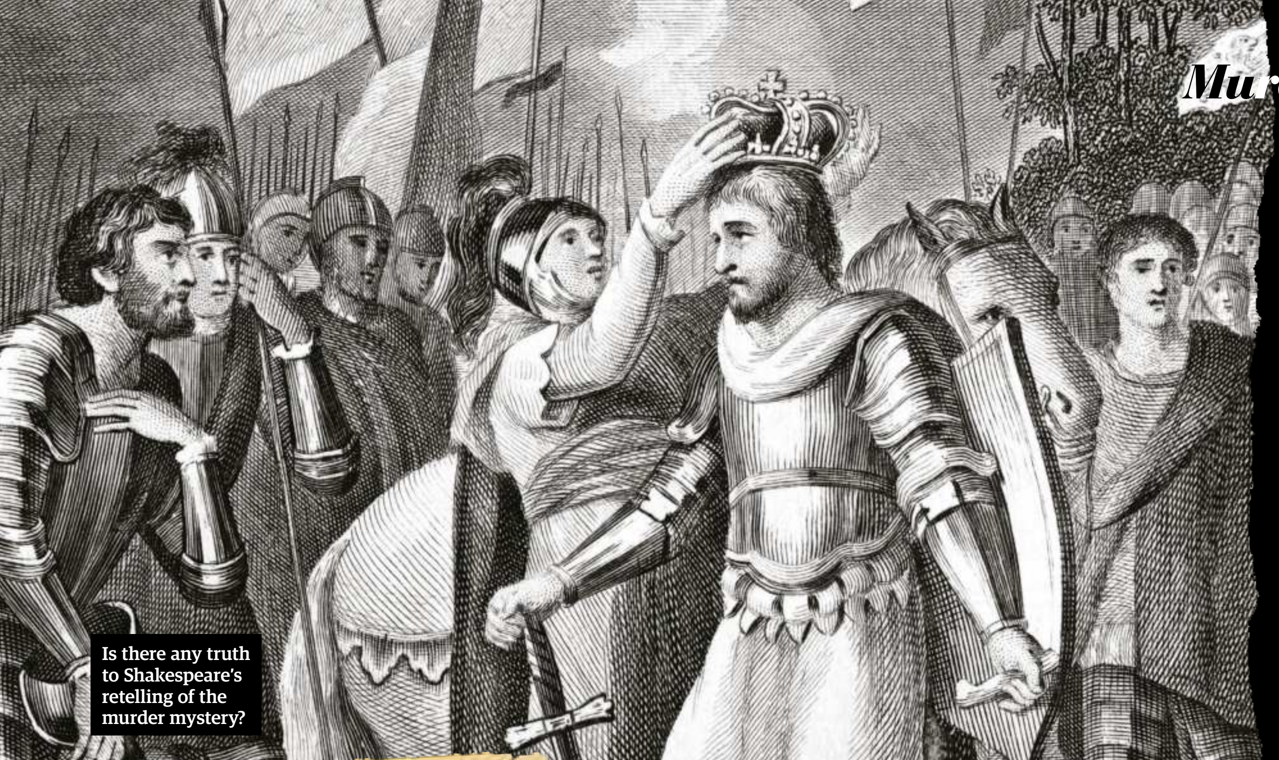


Warbeck claimed he was Richard in the court of Burgundy in 1490, saying that he had been spared by his brother's murderers due to his young age, but swore to not reveal his identity. His claim was supported by Richard's sister, Margaret of York, and he gained support from various monarchs, most notably James IV of Scotland. However, after hearing the king's army was advancing towards him, he fled. He was eventually captured and taken to the Tower of London after being paraded through the streets to be made an example of. He was imprisoned alongside Edward, Earl of Warwick, the nephew of Edward IV and Richard III, and when the two of them attempted to escape in 1499, he was hanged.

Lambert Simnel

When the young Simnel was taken in by a priest named Richard Simonds, the man noticed the alarming similarity between the boy and the sons of Edward IV. He made plans to present Simnel as Richard, but when he heard that Edward, Earl of Warwick, had died in imprisonment, he changed his claim and declared him as the earl instead. With a rebellion already planned by the Yorkists, Simnel became the figurehead and gained support in Ireland. However, his army was defeated by the kings and due to his young age. Simnel was pardoned and given a job in the royal kitchen.

JOHN HOWARD
JOHN HOWARD



Is there any truth to Shakespeare's retelling of the murder mystery?

A deadly rumour

Margaret Beaufort, Henry VII's mother, is another name that has been linked to the murders, but a more compelling theory is that although she didn't kill them, she began the rumour that Richard did. With her focus on the interests of her son, Beaufort enlisted the help of Woodville and Buckingham to drive the autumn rebellion and place her son on the throne. The rumour of the boys' deaths and Richard's connection to it certainly started a domino effect that led to Henry VII's rule, and this very well may have been due to his mother, as the ultimate spin master, working behind the scenes to tarnish Richard's name and prompt people to flock to her son's side.

HENRY VII
HENRY VII

Suspect 04

Henry VII

Motive: Secure his hold on the throne
Opportunity: Access to the Tower upon becoming king

When Henry VII set his sights on the English crown, his claim was incredibly weak – there were almost 30 nobles with a more credible claim. He knew ascension would not happen through birthright, but instead conquest, and to achieve this he needed allies. He vowed to marry Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV and elder sister to the two princes. By doing this, he gained the support of Lancastrians as well as the disenfranchised Yorkists.

But once he became king after the battle at Bosworth and was set to marry Elizabeth, he encountered a problem: Richard III had declared Edward IV's children illegitimate in *Titulus Regius*. Now that Henry was king, he could easily overturn it, which he did – even burning all copies to deny it ever existed. Although this returned legitimacy to his wife-to-be, it also meant that the princes were the legal claimants to the throne. This left Henry with no choice – he had to have the princes killed or lose his crown. It is argued that this happened not in 1483, as commonly believed, but in 1486.

> "He had to have the princes killed or lose his crown"

This date is supported by Tyrell's confession, as he received two pardons from Henry in 1486. This is an unusual occurrence, and Henry would later proclaim that Tyrell had indeed confessed to the murders – and as Tyrell was Richard's loyal servant, it was easy for him to shift the blame on his predecessor. This theory is also supported by Henry's treatment of the princes' mother, Elizabeth Woodville, who was deprived of her lands and fees.

It is certainly no secret that Henry made efforts to wipe out remaining Plantagenets, but it seems very unlikely that nobody would have mentioned the boys if they had survived three years longer than previously believed. For the early part of his reign, Henry faced constant rebellions from angry Yorkists; it is difficult to believe none of them would have accused him of this crime had it occurred during his time on the throne. Additionally, if they had survived until this date, why did Richard III not previously display them after being accused of their murder? This would have helped redeem his reputation and likely quell the rebellion, but he did not. It is also similarly unlikely that Elizabeth Woodville would have supported Henry's claim to the throne, as she did by agreeing to his marriage with her daughter, had she known her sons were still alive.

Most revealing of all is Henry's reaction when pretenders of the princes emerged. When Perkin Warbeck claimed to be the young Richard, Henry was so worried that he made peace with France to prevent a rebellion. His actions were those of a nervous man, unlike his confident response when Lambert Simnel emerged posing as the earl of Warwick, who Henry knew was locked up in the Tower. This is a telling indication that Henry had no idea what happened to the princes. Considering Henry was 14 when he left England and didn't return until the Battle of Bosworth, it is more likely that Henry knew less about their fate than most; he never accused Richard of the act for exactly that reason. All Henry could do was assume and hope, for the sake of his throne, that they were dead.

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1452-85

Richard III

The last Plantagenet king to hold the English throne, Richard III was one of the few individuals who did as much before his reign as during it

Despite a reign that only lasted two years - one of the shortest in British history - Richard Plantagenet had a profound effect on the realm. Raised in the feudal conflict that was later named the Wars of the Roses, Richard spent most of his life battling to both attain power *and* defend it, an experience that moulded him into a brilliant strategist and someone who always led his military campaigns into battle.

Some called him a cruel tyrant, while others saw him as a focused progressive who fought long and hard to strengthen the realm and the House of York's hold on the English crown. He's a monarch surrounded by myth and legend, both in regard to his physical appearance and whether he had a hand in the supposed death of the Princes in the Tower. Little wonder he has fascinated historians for over 700 years.

> Richard III had a great deal of affection for the north of England. He even cofounded the Council of the North

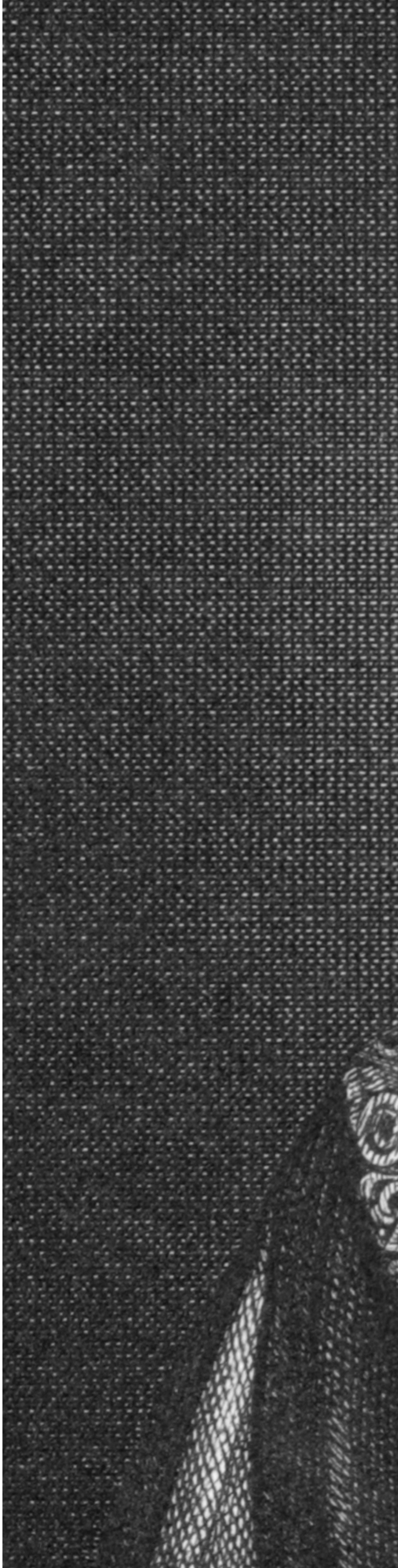
Born on 2 October 1452, Richard was the son of Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York and his wife, Cecily Neville. Despite being fathered by a man with a significantly strong claim to Henry VI's throne, Richard was way down the pecking order as the 12th of 13 children. The duke himself was deeply unpopular with the House of York's fiercest rival, the House of Lancaster - this also included Queen Margaret of Anjou, who held sway over the weak-minded king. Richard's father refused to renounce his claim and the dispute eventually culminated with a brutal clash at the Battle of Wakefield. Despite leading a sizeable military force, the duke of York was killed on 30 December 1460 alongside his second son (and fifth child) Edmund, Earl of Rutland.

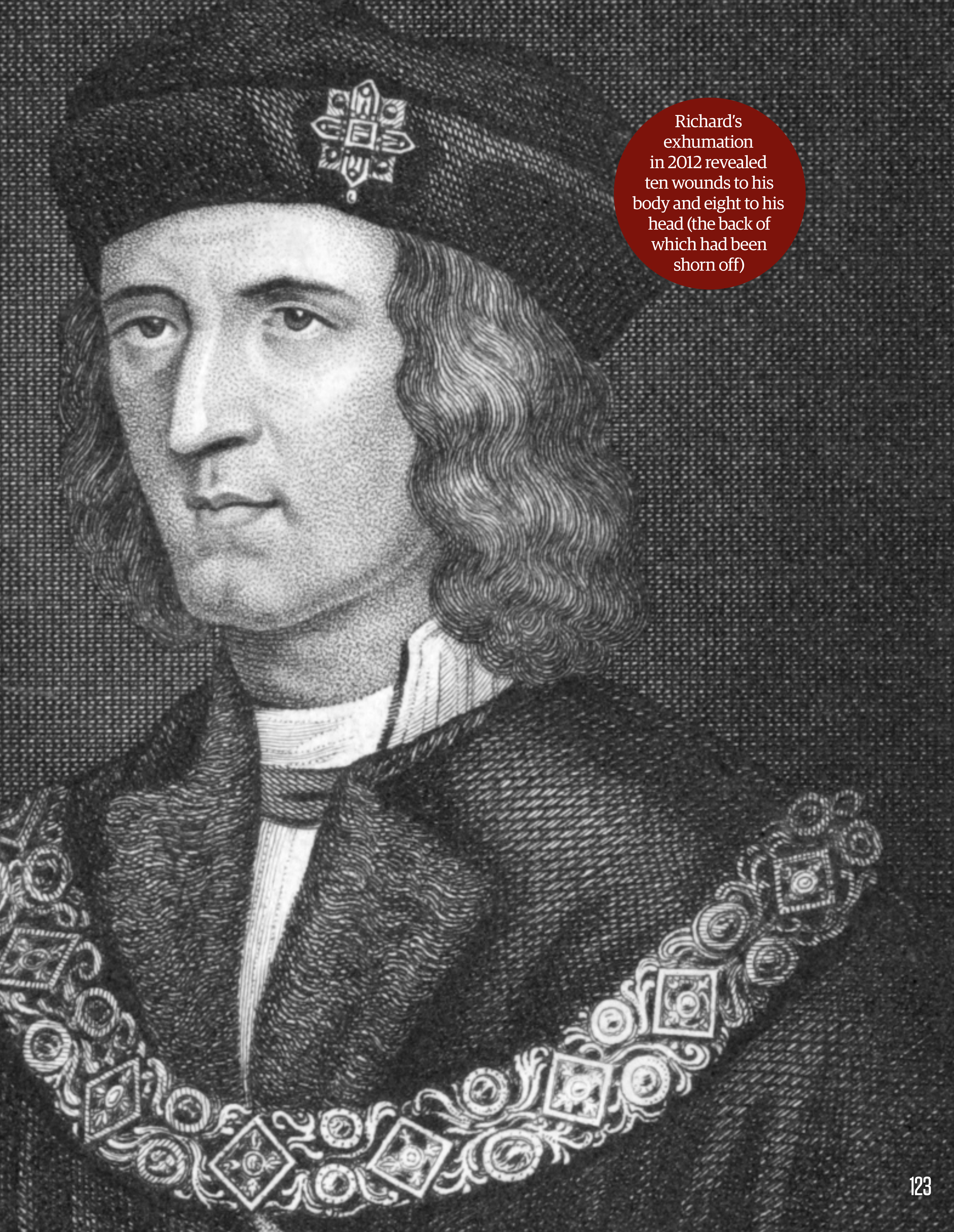
With his father dead and disgraced, Richard was packed off with his brother George to the Low Countries (modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands) while his eldest brother Edward (now the fourth duke of York) led a 30,000-strong army into battle with what remained of Henry's forces on 29 March 1461 at Towton. Edward's army destroyed the king's forces and upon hearing the news, the absentee monarch fled to Scotland with his family. Richard returned to England shortly after to see his brother crowned Edward IV. The Yorkists had returned to court and young Richard was about to be thrust into the middle of a new regime.

Edward's ascension to the throne was hardly the end of the conflict. The Wars of the Roses had really only just begun. After Edward's coronation in 1461, he made Richard the duke of Gloucester as well as a Knight of the Garter and a Knight of the Bath. In order to facilitate Richard's training as a knight and nobleman, Edward sent him to study under his cousin, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. Warwick was one of the most powerful nobles in England and had been instrumental in providing the new king with the military strength he needed to take the throne.

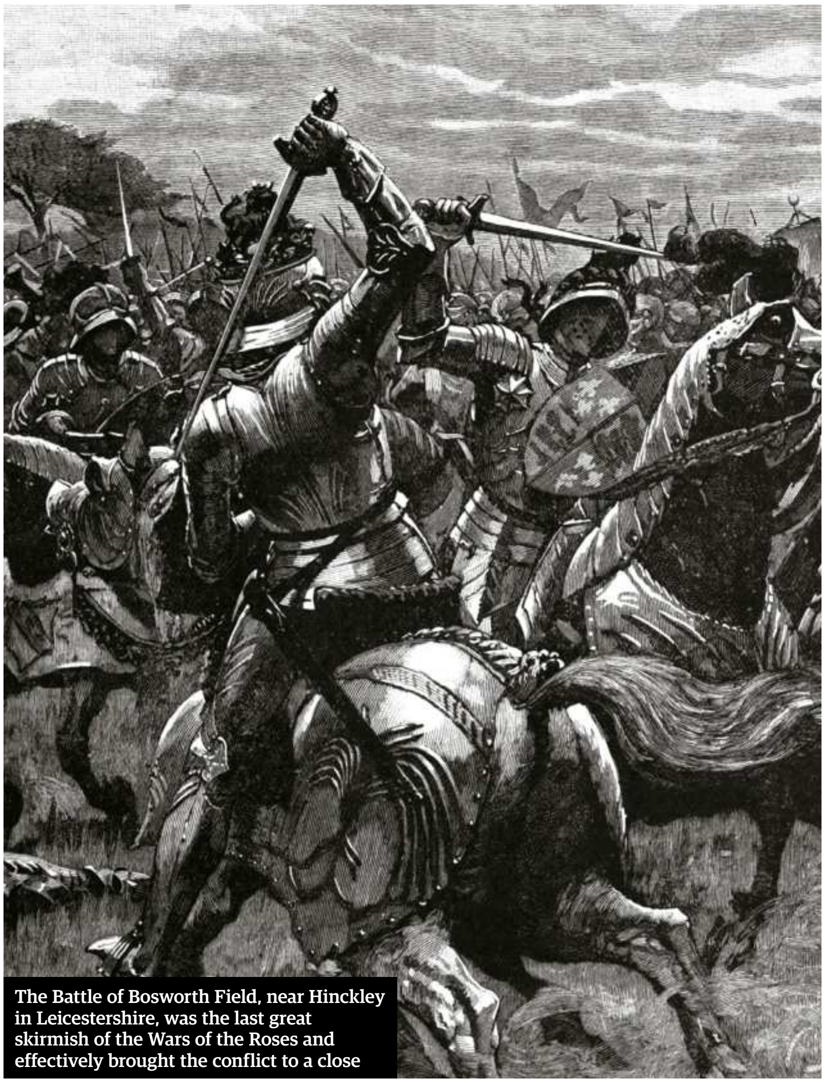
In exchange for providing a place for Richard at his household in Middleham, Warwick organised marriages for both Richard and his brother George to his own daughters. Edward was against the idea and the disagreement drove a wedge between two of the most powerful men in the realm. George would eventually wed Warwick's daughter Isabel in 1469, leading him to side with his new father-in-law, while Richard refused the arrangement and placed his fealty in the king. That show of loyalty would bind Edward and Richard for the next two decades as England's war began to escalate.

Warwick would prove to be a chaos factor in the lives of Richard and the new king. He eventually chose to defect and form an alliance with Margaret of Anjou, subsequently organising a number of rebellions to undermine Edward's reign. This discontent, in both civil unrest and propaganda in court, eventually forced Richard and Edward to flee to Flanders in May 1470. Richard accompanied Edward back to England a year later and the king appointed him as his main lieutenant. An already

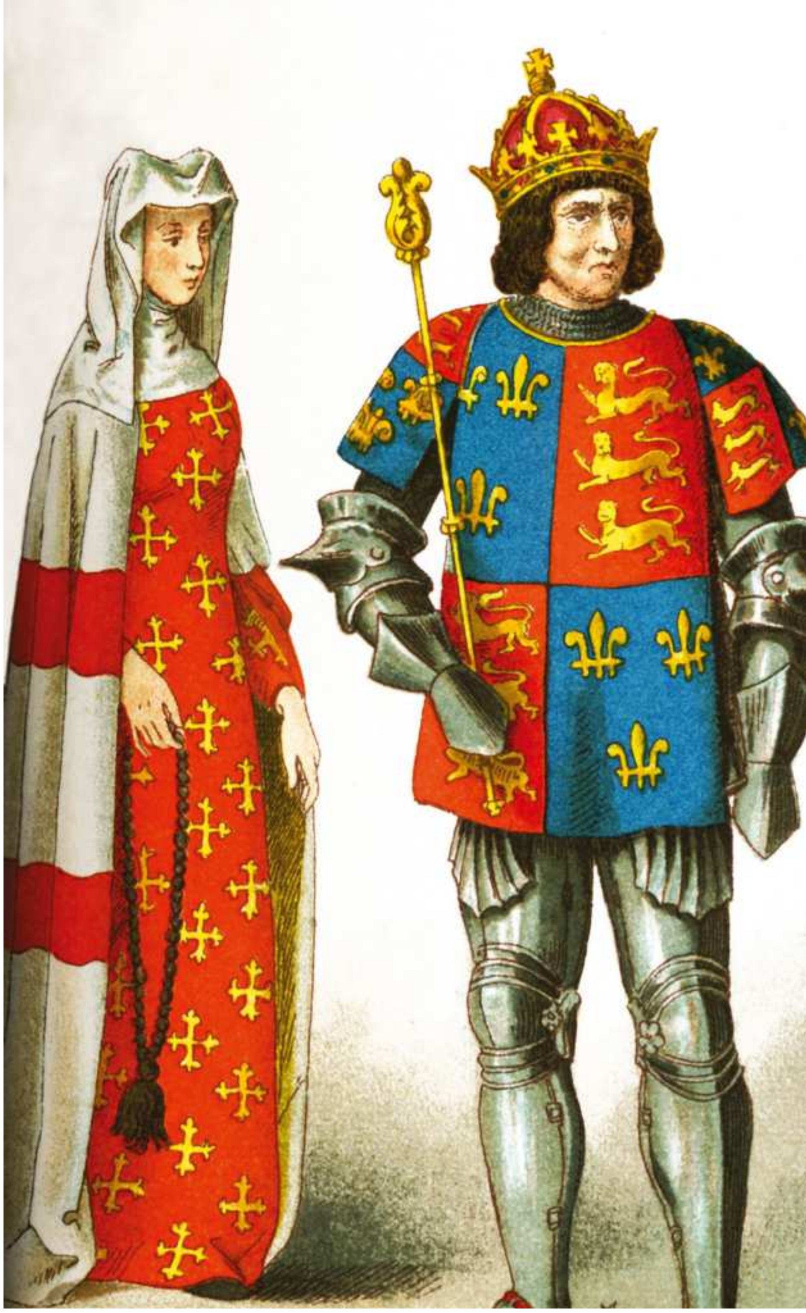




Richard's exhumation in 2012 revealed ten wounds to his body and eight to his head (the back of which had been shorn off)



The Battle of Bosworth Field, near Hinckley in Leicestershire, was the last great skirmish of the Wars of the Roses and effectively brought the conflict to a close



driven and aspiring military leader, the young Plantagenet led Edward's forces in the Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, where his use of a small but ruthless force led to the deaths of Warwick and the Lancastrian heir (and the former king's son), Edward, Prince of Wales.

Edward IV was keen to reward his brother's fierce loyalty and with Warwick out of the picture, Richard inherited most of his lands in Yorkshire. He was also appointed constable and warden of the north, positions of power that would slowly consolidate into a power base close to the one Warwick himself wielded before his defection. Richard rarely left the north for the next decade, tired of the politics and intrigue of his brother's court in London. The Lancastrian threat was largely extinguished after Edward's restoration, the only real claimant left being Henry Tudor who was exiled in France.

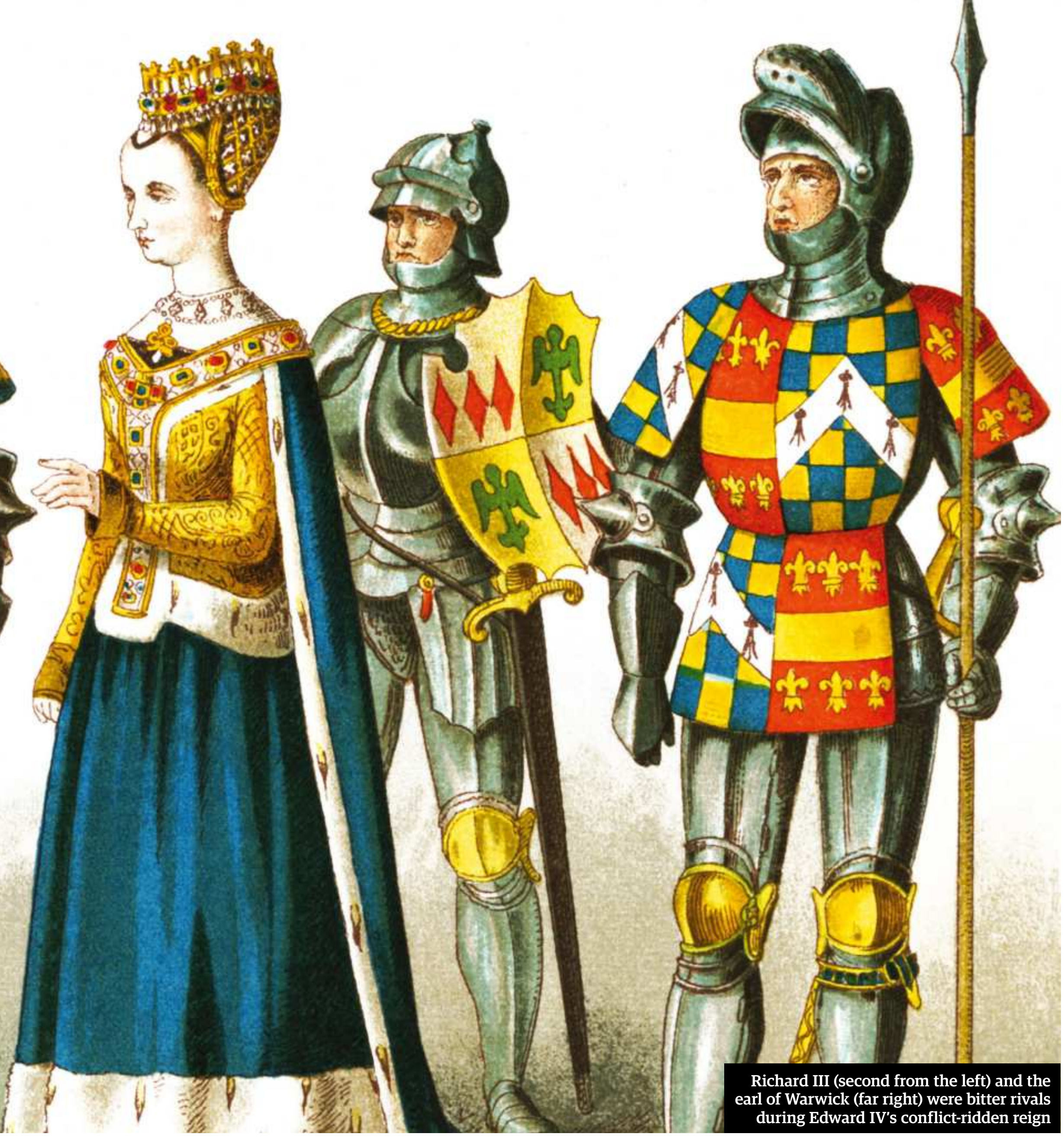
Edward fell gravely ill and died on 9 April 1483, but not before he named Richard lord protector of the realm and his son and heir, Edward. When Richard was informed of his brother's death and his new position as regent, he marched alongside the duke of Buckingham in an armed escort bound for London. While on the way, he received word that a plot was being formed to assassinate him and remove the threat he potentially posed as the de facto ruler. According to his sources, Anthony Woodville, second Earl Rivers, Elizabeth's brother, was behind the plot, so Richard had him arrested and later executed as he made his way out of the north.

> Like many of his forebears, Richard was regarded as a valiant warrior and often led military campaigns from the front

In order to protect the young king, Richard escorted him and his brother to the capital. At the beginning of June, Richard and the two young royals arrived in London. Under the guidance of his advisors, Richard placed the two boys in lodgings in the Tower of London to keep them safe. However, all was not what it seemed. In an ironic twist of fate, Richard was now concerned over the same matter that had consumed his former enemy, Warwick: the rise of the Woodvilles. He was certain the once low-born family had had a hand in the plot to assassinate him and feared that Elizabeth and her allies would find a way to remove him from the equation and assume control over the young king. Something had to be done.

On 13 June, Richard called a council meeting at the Tower of London. While there, he accused William Hastings, first Baron Hastings, of plotting to use the princes as a means of usurping Richard's power and summarily had Hastings executed a few days later. Around this time a clergyman (said to be Robert Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells) informed Richard that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville had been invalid on the grounds Edward had been contracted to marry the noblewoman Lady Eleanor Talbot. If true, this claim would deem Edward and Elizabeth's children illegitimate, making Richard Edward's true heir.

By 22 June, sermons were already being preached that the uncrowned Edward V and his brother Richard were illegitimate. A few days later, the duke of Gloucester was proclaimed the rightful heir by Parliament and he was crowned King Richard III of England in Westminster Abbey on 6 July. In order to solidify his claim to the throne, in 1484 Richard even had Parliament draw up the *Titulus Regius*, a legal document that confirmed him as the true successor to his brother's crown. After decades of warring



Richard III (second from the left) and the earl of Warwick (far right) were bitter rivals during Edward IV's conflict-ridden reign

"In August 1485, news reached the king that Henry Tudor had arrived in West Wales with an army"

against one king and working with another, Richard was finally the one sat on the throne. However, there would be little time to rest or recuperate. Rebellion was in the air.

Even though living in exile, the presence of Henry Tudor loomed large in Richard's mind. Despite the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury severely wounding the House of Lancaster's hold in England, it still boasted allies and potential military outlets overseas, and Richard knew it was only a matter of time before the Lancastrian upstart would rally enough support to land an invasion and challenge the king for his crown. It was no surprise when Tudor's name began popping up amid rumours of a rebellion in late 1483.

Reports suggest that conspirators were in support of Henry taking the throne and marrying Elizabeth of York – the older sister of the imprisoned, and now possibly deceased, Princes in the Tower – effectively forming a union that would end the costly Wars of the Roses. When Richard discovered that one of his trusted political allies, the duke of Buckingham, had sided with the rebels, the king marched to meet them. The uprising had largely fallen apart due to disintegrating support in the wake of military action and a storm that forced Henry Tudor to return to his exile in France, but it was an ominous glimpse of what was to come.

In August 1485, news reached the king that Henry Tudor had arrived in West Wales with an army of a few hundred men, most of whom were French mercenaries rather than loyal English soldiers. Richard immediately began mobilising all of his forces, recalling every loyal noble with a standing military force to join his march on the Lancastrian incursion. As Henry moved through Wales and across the border into England, his forces continued to swell with a number of supporters – including influential Welsh landholder, Rhys ap Thomas –

Richard was the last British monarch to die during battle. Exhumation of his remains suggests he lost his helmet and his skull was struck multiple times at close range

Five facts from the reign of Richard III

A new tongue

One of the most fascinating changes Richard III made to his court was the introduction of English as its preferred language. The legacy of Roman occupation and William I's Norman invasion had instilled both Latin and French as its base lexicon, but Richard was determined to normalise it to his mother tongue.

Printing popularity

The arrival of printing in England towards the end of the 1400s had a profound effect on its population. Introduced by William Caxton, an English merchant, in 1476, the printing press allowed the mass production of everything from literary works to pamphlets. He was also one of the first to do so in English.

Population problems

Abandoned villages, towns and settlements were far from an uncommon sight in the mid to late 1400s. The Black Death had ravaged England at the beginning of the century, reducing the population by one-third. Continued famine from failed harvests also kept the population at a low.

Agricultural changes

Continued bad weather wrecked many a crop in the late 1400s, forcing a significant change in the way Englishmen worked the land. Landowners struggled to find labour to till their land as workers spread to acquire smallholdings of their own. This period also saw the rise of enclosures as many farmers focused on pasturing.

Livery and maintenance

The Wars of the Roses had a huge effect on England, especially among its nobles. The breakdown of royal authority would lead lords and nobles to offer 'livery and maintenance', whereby a lower class would receive protection for wearing their colours (livery) and bearing arms for them (maintenance).

Rebellion of 1483

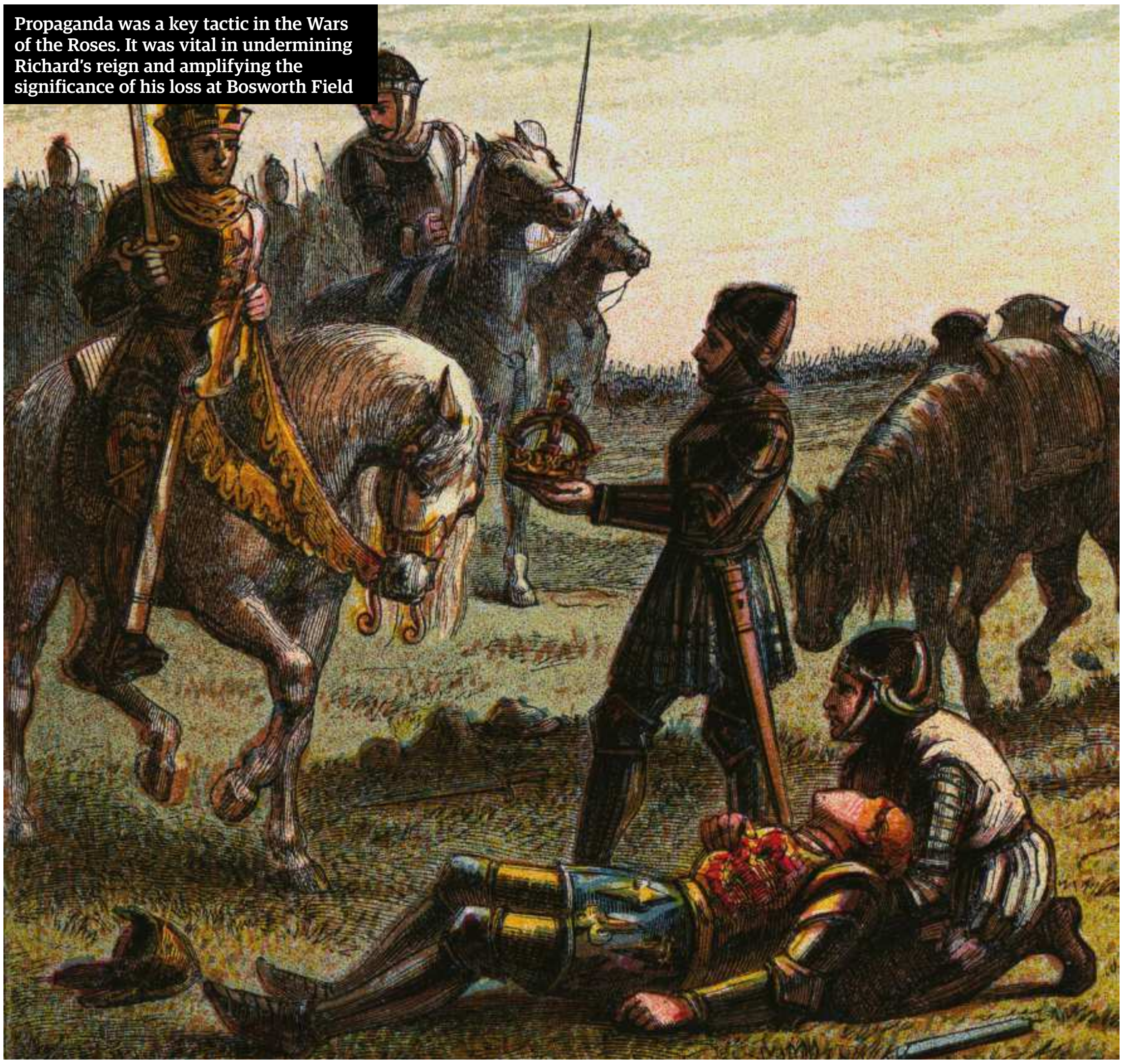
A few months after Richard's coronation, a conspiracy was beginning to form among some of England's most disaffected nobles. The conspiracy was led by a handful of individuals, most notably Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham.

Buckingham had been one of Richard's most influential supporters and had been rewarded handsomely with lands and patronage. He'd played a part in the coup over the stewardship of the young Edward V and his brother, but many historians differ on what it was that led him to conspire against his king. Some argue that he may have possibly been involved in the princes' supposed deaths, while others believe that rumours of their fates turned him against the Plantagenet monarch. In an ironic twist of fate, Richard actually sent Buckingham to investigate rumours of a plot among his gentry in the south before the duke eventually chose to join it.

Buckingham began planning a coup with two of his main conspirators: John Morton, the archbishop of Canterbury and Reginald Bray, a fellow disenfranchised noble. Their plan was to invite the exiled Lancastrian claimant Henry Tudor to take the throne with their financial and military support. It was an ambitious plan and the sheer scale needed for its execution would be its undoing.

Richard was livid when he found out about Buckingham's involvement. On 12 October he penned a heated letter to his chancellor, stating: "Resist the malice of him that had the best cause to be true, the duke of Buckingham, the most untrue creature living." Whatever Buckingham's true motives for joining the rebellion, his contribution would ultimately be for nothing. He was unable to drum up much support from the tenants living on his lands (especially in Wales) and considerable flooding in the south would halt much of the rebellion's progress. Henry had also sailed to meet the rebellion but his ship hit a storm, forcing him to return to France.

Richard placed a reward of £1,000 on Buckingham's head as the uprising began to fall apart and the duke soon fled. He was eventually caught, tried for treason and beheaded on 2 November.



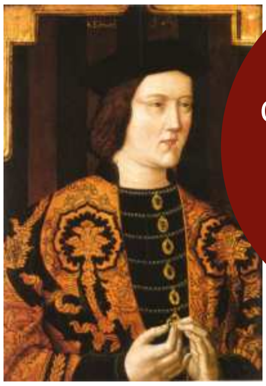
Propaganda was a key tactic in the Wars of the Roses. It was vital in undermining Richard's reign and amplifying the significance of his loss at Bosworth Field

Defining moment

Edward IV becomes king

4 March 1461

With the House of York reeling from the loss of the duke, his eldest son and heir Edward, Earl of March, leads the charge against the Lancastrian forces and the two sides meet at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross in February 1461. Edward is victorious and marches on London, claiming the throne a month later. After driving back another force of Lancastrian soldiers later that month, Edward is finally able to establish a Yorkist hold on the most powerful seat in England. With his brother crowned Edward IV in June, Richard is granted the title duke of Gloucester five months later.



Richard's body was buried at Greyfriars, Leicester, but the friary was destroyed in 1538 during Henry VIII's dissolution

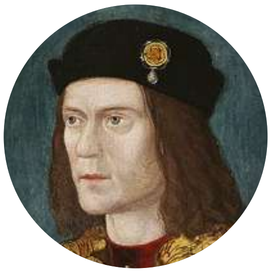
Timeline

1452

- **Richard is born**
  Richard III is born as Richard of York at Fotheringhay Castle in the county of Northamptonshire. He is the 12th of 13 children born to Richard, 3rd Duke of York, and his wife, Cecily Neville.
  2 October 1452

- **The duke falls**
  When Richard is just eight, his father dies at the Battle of Wakefield, a decisive clash between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces. The death of the duke sends a shockwave through the House of York.
  30 December 1460

- **Gaining northern lands**
  His brother grants him territories across the land to preside over. Edward gives him lordships in Richmond (Yorkshire), Pembroke (Wales) and East Anglia.
  12 August 1462



- **Governor of the north**
  The first real position of power that Richard gains is the role of governor of the north. Richard holds a strong affinity for that part of the country and he proves to be popular with its citizens.
  2 October 1462

- **Constable of England**
  Richard's loyalty to his brother during these formative years of rule pays dividends. He is granted myriad titles during this time, including constable and Lord High Admiral of England.
  17 October 1462

> "With Richard's hold on victory beginning to slip, Stanley made his move. He led his 6,000-strong forces straight into the flank of Richard's army"

adding more soldiers to his army. By the time Henry arrived in Leicestershire following a 200-mile march, his army was said to have increased to approximately 5,000 men.

The king and the pretender met on 22 August 1485 at Bosworth Field, just outside of Market Bosworth, Leicester (a city with which Richard III had close ties). The king brought with him 10,000 to 15,000 men and an arsenal of 140 cannons, one of the largest to ever grace a European battlefield. The two armies met in a battle of incredible scale. Overlooking the scene was one of Richard's allies, Sir William Stanley, who stood behind the king's forces with a contingent of 6,000 men, watching the two armies clash and waiting to see how the conflict would fare.

Despite Richard's superior forces, Henry's army began to turn the tide. With Richard's hold on victory beginning to slip, Stanley made his move. He led his 6,000-strong forces straight into the flank of Richard's army, routing it as the king attempted to keep the Tudor forces' advance at bay.

With his crown hanging in the balance, Richard, who had led his army from the front for the entirety of the battle, spied Henry watching the conflict from across the field. In a last-ditch attempt to tip the scales in his favour, Richard charged across the war zone to meet his foe but was cut down before he could reach him. Tests performed on Richard's exhumed remains in 2012 revealed that he received a blow to the head from behind, most likely from a halberd or a long sword. With the king dead, Stanley took the bloody crown from Richard's body and placed it upon the head of Henry Tudor, proclaiming him to be England's new king. After over 330 years, the rule of the House of Plantagenet was over. The age of the Tudors had begun.

It seems as if Richard's reign was over before it had even had a chance to begin, with only two short years on the throne. Nevertheless, in between putting down rebellions and fortifying his kingdom against a Lancastrian invasion, Richard was also responsible for a number of legislative changes that had a profound effect on his subjects. He was the first king of England to take his coronation oath in English instead of Latin, as well as ensuring all laws were published in English so that everyone was able to read them. He oversaw the enactment of the Land Tenure Act that protected landowners from having their lands stolen or sold by others and even introduced the system of 'bail' - a factor that forms a well-known role in our legal system today. But unfortunately it wasn't to be. It was time for the Tudors to take the helm of England and the Richard was the last Plantagenet on the throne.

> Established in 1924, the Richard III Society aims to re-evaluate the historical interpretation of his actions and demeanour

The war with Scotland

One of the most interesting distinctions about Richard was the amount of power and influence he had before he became king. In 1461, Richard's brother Edward became King Edward VI and in turn granted Richard the title of duke of Gloucester. In the months that followed, Richard acquired a great deal of land in the north and with his brother relying on him more, he was made governor of the north. This effectively made him the most powerful noble in England at the time.

Meanwhile, relations with Scotland were rapidly deteriorating. The Scottish king, James III, had learned that Richard's brother had given his permission for the duke to expand his holdings in the north into the south of Scotland. The threat of such a move and Richard's increasing power on the other side of the border boiled together with Edward's frustration over the failure of the Fotheringhay Treaty, a political arrangement to marry James's son to Cecily of York, leading James to declare war in 1480. Edward made Richard commander of a 20,000-strong army, leading to years of skirmishes, sieges and showdowns. Eventually the Scottish king sent his brother, the Duke of Albany, to agree a treaty with the king in February 1483.

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Defining moment

Defeat and flight

13 September 1469

In November 1467, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, switches sides and joins the Lancastrians against Edward IV. This defection has catastrophic results for the king and Richard. The king has also become unpopular with large parts of the nation, leading his brother George, Duke of Clarence, to side with Warwick. The two eventually flee to France and orchestrate a series of uprisings against the king with an aim to place Henry VI, a former Lancastrian king, back on the throne. The rebels are successful and Edward and Richard are forced into exile.

Edward and Richard return from exile
Edward and Richard land in England and reclaim York. From this northern base, and with Richard as his main military commander, Edward defeats the Lancastrians at the Battle of Barnet.
11 March 1471

Richard's power grows
Following the disgrace of the earl of Warwick, Richard takes control of most of his assets. He also marries Anne Neville, which, collectively, makes him the second most powerful man in England.
May-July 1472

Defining moment

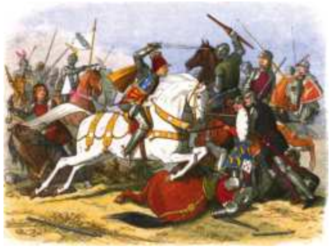
Richard assumes control

6 July 1483

When Edward IV dies in 1483, he names Richard as lord protector of his 12-year-old son and heir, Edward V. Under advisement, Richard moves the princes to the Tower of London to keep them safe. In the meantime, some of Richard's allies propose the claim that Edward's marriage was not valid and that the Princes in the Tower are in fact illegitimate. It's not known if this is a plot engineered by Richard himself to undermine his brother's legacy, but key supporters in government help to add weight to Richard's rightful claim to the throne. With overwhelming support, he is crowned king in 1483.

Buckingham's Rebellion
In the first months of his reign, Richard confronts a rebellion led by former ally the duke of Buckingham. It ultimately fails and Buckingham is executed.
October 1483

Tudor propaganda
While Richard would always find support in the north of England, his Lancastrian enemies continue to undermine his regime with skirmishes and incessant propaganda that undermine his rule.
April 1485



1485

Battle of Bosworth Field
The conflict with the House of Tudor culminates in a huge battle between the two sides. Richard leads the charge and is cut down. Henry Tudor becomes king.
22 August 1485

Dawn of the Tudors

During the Wars of the Roses, many vied to wear the crown of England, but an unlikely claimant silenced the battle drums to become king

Written by Ian Rimmer

The small fleet set sail from France on 1 August 1485. Seven days later, the babble of mostly French voices and Scottish accents were heard on Welsh soil as the force made land at Milford Haven. They were soldiers of fortune, 2,000 strong at most, employed to fulfil a simple mission – seize the crown of England for their figurehead. This 'man who would be king' was Henry Tudor. His father, Edmund Tudor, had died before he was born. However, his mother, Margaret Beaufort, was very much alive. Both a widow and a mother before her 14th birthday, she later came to see that if events and circumstances turned sufficiently in her only son's favour, England's throne could be his. On 7 August, on the Pembrokeshire coast, he was closer than he'd ever been.

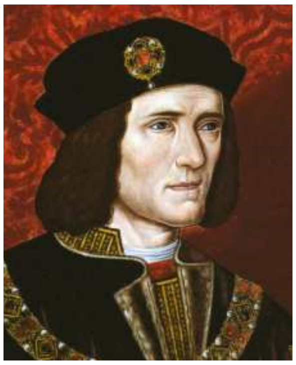
The royal blood in his veins was thin – his mother was a descendant of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and his mistress, Katherine Swynford, the pair later marrying to legitimise the line – but it was there. The Milford Haven landing site was near to where Henry was born, at Pembroke Castle, in 1457. King Henry VI had been the reigning monarch then. Edmund, Henry Tudor's father, and his uncle, Jasper, shared the same mother as the king, who looked favourably upon the offspring of her second marriage. Treating his half-brothers well was one of Henry VI's few virtues. Hindered by bouts of mental illness, his reign was ill-starred. During it, he weakly allowed courtiers, especially the Beaufort family, and his wife, Margaret of Anjou, to grab power and wealth. The king's administration was increasingly incompetent and corrupt.

At the age of four, Henry Tudor was in the care of his uncle Jasper at Pembroke Castle in Wales. Jasper was a loyal Lancastrian, fighting in vain to keep the castle out of Yorkist hands. It fell to William Herbert, and young Henry found himself in Herbert's household in 1469. That year, however, the Wars resumed following a fall out between Edward IV and Warwick. The latter switched sides to orchestrate a coup against the king, who fled to the continent. Henry VI, a prisoner in the Tower of London for five years, was released and restored to the throne. In this brief Lancastrian revival, Herbert was executed after the Battle of Edgecote Moor, and Henry Tudor went back to his uncle.

Events turned swiftly again when Edward returned to England. Gathering followers, he faced Warwick at the Battle of Barnet and triumphed. Warwick, 'the kingmaker', was killed. The same fate befell Henry VI's heir, the 17-year-old Edward, Prince of Wales, at the next battle, at Tewkesbury.

RICHARD III

Troops 10-15,000



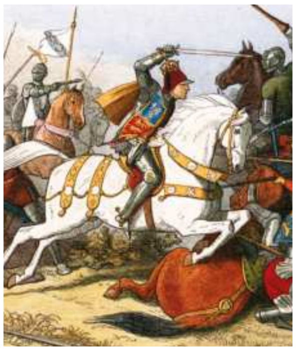
King Richard III

LEADER

The Plantagenet king of England was determined to keep his throne at any cost.

Strengths Richard was the veteran of several battles and an experienced fighter.

Weakness His willingness to embroil himself in the fight often placed him in danger.



Heavy cavalry

KEY UNIT

The armoured killing machines bent on glory.

Strengths Incredibly effective against infantry.

Weakness Easy to bring down if caught static and surrounded.

Artillery

KEY WEAPON

A new and deadly addition to the 15th-century battlefield.

Strengths Intimidating, loud and terrifying to come face to face with.

Weakness Often inaccurate and prone to misfires.

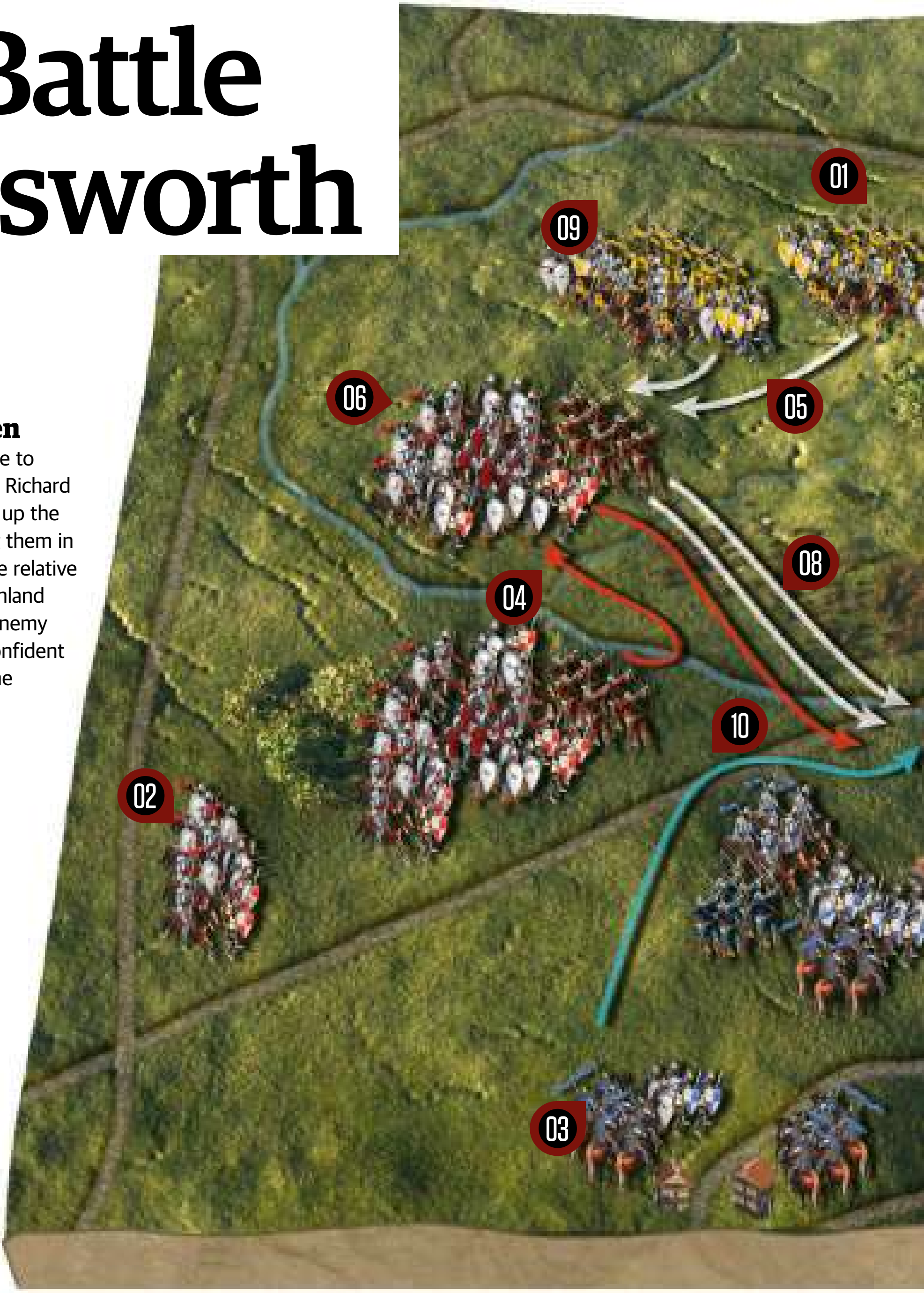
The Battle of Bosworth

01 King Richard deploys his men

With his battle line spread wide to envelop the advancing troops, Richard aims to use his guns to soften up the rebel infantry, before encasing them in a swift flanking move. With the relative safety of the hill and the marshland below poised to hamper the enemy horses and men, the king is confident that he will be able to crush the enemy.

02 Henry approaches

Marching from his camp to the southwest of Richard's position, Oxford and Henry lead the army along the Roman road, before they come under fire from the king's artillery just 1,000 yards from Richard's position. The Stanley brothers' forces are some way off still, approaching further south-east from their camp.



03 The Stanley brothers wait

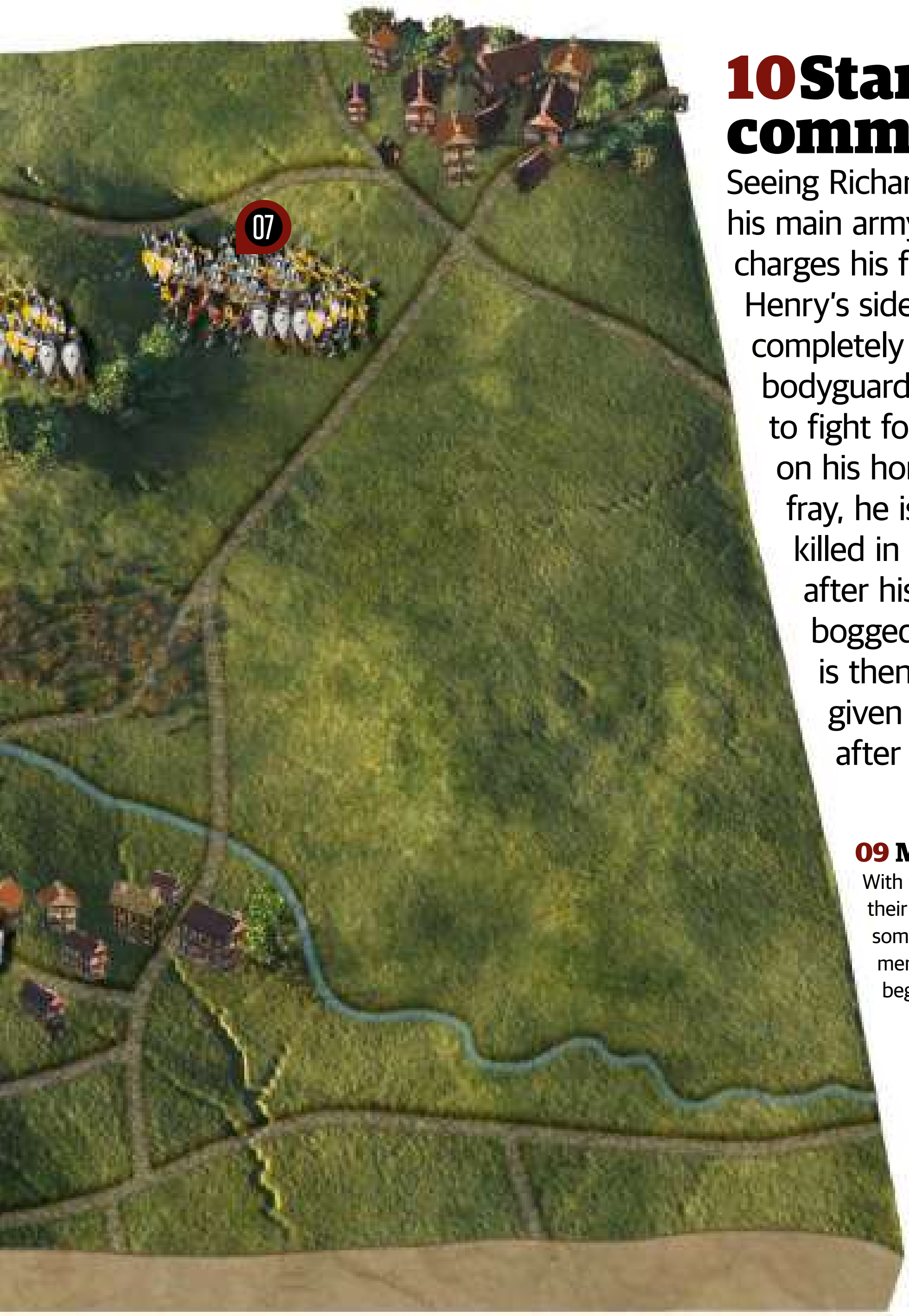
Spotting the battle about to begin, both Stanleys bring their forces to a halt and wait to see which side will gain the upper hand.

04 Oxford manoeuvres

With Richard's battle lineup on the hill now revealed to him, Oxford decides to wheel his men back and around the marshland, moving towards Richard's vanguard on his right flank. This is the battle group commanded by the duke of Norfolk, a close ally of the king's. Seeing this move, Richard sends his order for Norfolk to attack down the hill at the rebels.

05 The battle begins

Charging down from its advantage on the hill, Norfolk's vanguard initially causes Oxford's advancing troops to falter. The rebel force soon gathers itself into a wedge formation, banding together to weather the onslaught from the king's archers and knights. Henry remains with his small bodyguard force, to the rear of the fighting, to remain relatively protected from the thick of the melee.



06 Norfolk is slain

With his helmet smashed away by the earl of Oxford in fierce combat, the duke of Norfolk is fatally wounded by an arrow. News of his death spreads quickly and disheartens the Yorkist force, as well as the king, the duke's patron.

07 Northumberland hesitates

Whether through treachery or a breakdown in communication, the earl of Northumberland fails to respond to Richard's command for his men to join the fight. Though his position on the far left of the king's line could have prevented him from manoeuvring successfully, the earl's hesitation to commit to battle is likely through uncertainty over which side to back.

08 Richard charges

Spotting Henry's standard behind his lines, moving towards the Stanley forces, the king sees an opportunity to kill his enemy and end the battle quickly. He charges with his household cavalry, taking Henry's standard-bearer by surprise and killing him outright. However, the young usurper's bodyguards swiftly move between Richard and their lord, keeping him from harm. Richard and his men fight hard to reach Henry, but they become locked in combat with the guards.

09 Melee on the hill

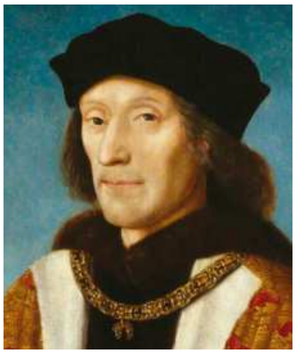
With their commander dead and their king out of sight, fighting somewhere in the thick of it, the men of the Yorkist vanguard begin to waver.

10 Stanley commits

Seeing Richard isolated from his main army, William Stanley charges his force in on Henry's side. The king is now completely cut off from his bodyguard and is compelled to fight for his life. Spurring on his horse away from the fray, he is cut down and killed in the marshland after his horse becomes bogged down. His crown is then recovered and given to Henry Tudor after the battle ends.

HENRY TUDOR

Troops 10-13,000



Henry Tudor

LEADER

The young Welsh pretender was back to force his claim to the throne.

Strengths A good claim, with a host of strong supporters.

Weakness Little to no experience of combat.

Archers

KEY UNIT

Raining down death from above with lethal efficiency.

Strengths Excellent range and extremely powerful.

Weakness Much less competent when in close combat.

Billhook

KEY WEAPON

The infantry were very skilled at taking down any armoured foes with this poleaxe.

Strengths Ideal for attacking mounted knights.

Weakness Large and unwieldy in close quarters.

Shortly after, the recaptured Henry VI died, possibly of ill health, but most likely murder. The Yorkist grip on the crown was now vice-like. Any Lancastrian noble or supporter was at risk. Jasper Tudor, one of the most prominent still alive, fled to Brittany in 1471, taking Henry with him.

Partly under protection, partly under house arrest, they lived in exile at the behest of Duke Francis II, who viewed the pair as useful pawns in his dispute with King Louis XI of France, and France's dispute with England. In 1476, Edward IV seemed to have persuaded Francis to hand the pair back for a payment, but a letter from Margaret Beaufort alerted Jasper and Henry of the plan. Henry feigned illness before they escaped to sanctuary.

Henry's mother had married twice more by then. Despite her Lancastrian roots, her marriage to Henry Stafford was harmonious, even though he fought for the Yorkists and died from wounds helping Edward IV triumph at Barnet. Her next marriage, in 1472, seems a calculated alliance. Her new husband was Thomas Lord Stanley, a wealthy landowner from the northwest of England and prominent in Edward IV's court. Given access to it by her marriage, Margaret soon impressed the queen, Elizabeth Woodville, becoming godmother to one of her daughters. No doubt aided by her husband's influence with the king, she sought to end her son's exile and secure his future. If Henry could return to England and regain his title – earl of Richmond – he might become a husband to Edward's eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth of York, potentially neutralising some of the bad blood between the two Houses.

Before any of that happened, though, Edward IV unexpectedly died. A commanding figure, tall, good looking and fond of high living, the excesses of his life simply took their toll. Edward's heir, the 12-year-old Prince of Wales, was set for the throne as Edward V. A regency council dominated by his uncles would be needed to aid him, but those uncles were at loggerheads. The late king's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, moved to seize the initiative. The prince was travelling to London with his mother's brother Anthony, Earl Rivers, when Gloucester, supported by the duke of Buckingham, intercepted them at Stony Stratford. Rivers was arrested for plotting against Gloucester, and would shortly be executed. Gloucester and Buckingham rode into London with the prince. Gloucester was declared protector of the realm.

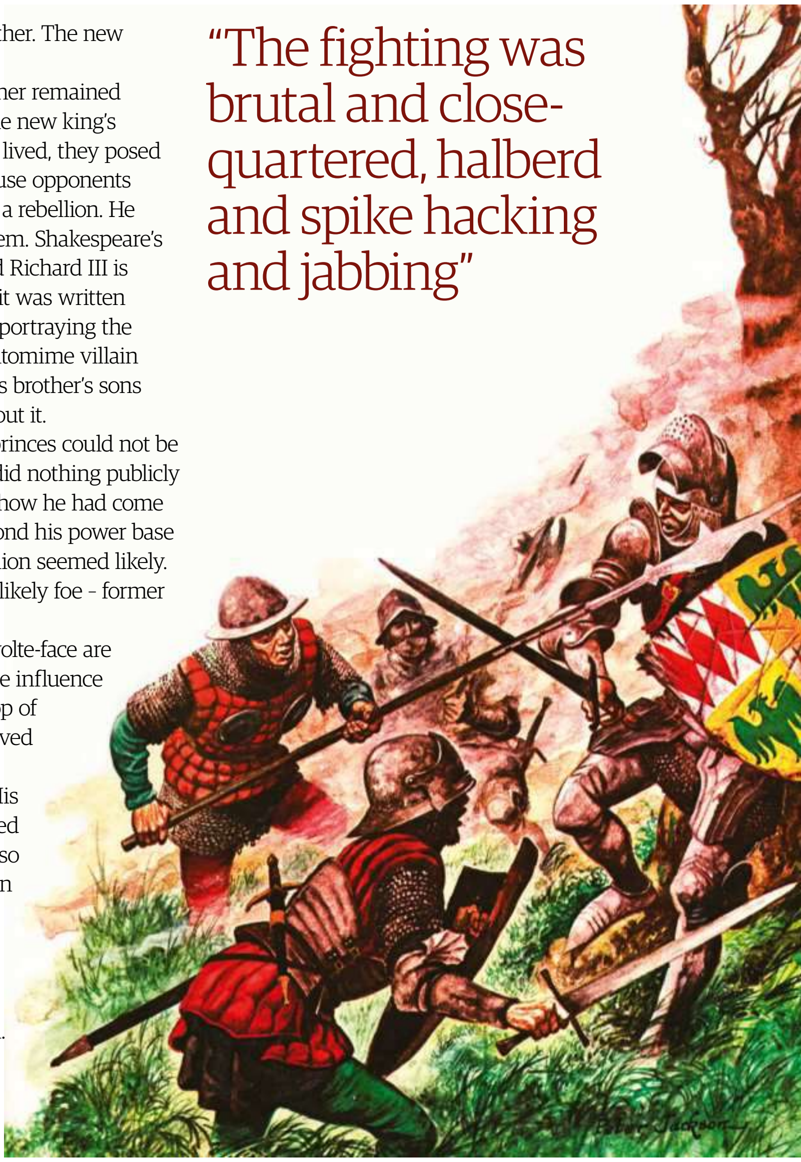
Next, at a meeting supposedly to plan Edward V's coronation, Gloucester accused his dead brother's trusted confidant, Lord Hastings, of plotting against him. While Hastings was beheaded without trial, others were arrested and imprisoned, including Thomas Lord Stanley. With Hastings silenced, Gloucester's supporters then asserted that the promiscuous Edward IV had promised to marry another woman before his wedding to Elizabeth Woodville, invalidating the marriage and rendering any offspring from it illegitimate. Parliament agreed and declared the late king's marriage invalid, leaving Gloucester as the Yorkist heir. He was crowned King Richard III on 6 July 1483. Stanley, released days earlier, was reinstated and took part in the coronation, as did his wife, Henry Tudor's mother. The new king's nephews, however, did not.

Edward V and his younger brother remained in the Tower, supposedly under the new king's protection. But while his nephews lived, they posed a threat to Richard's position because opponents could use them as figureheads for a rebellion. He had a clear motive to eliminate them. Shakespeare's version of a child-killing, deformed Richard III is often accepted as fact, yet though it was written to please a later royal household – portraying the pitiless monarch as virtually a pantomime villain – the central charge that he had his brother's sons murdered has the ring of truth about it.

Rumours of the demise of the princes could not be contained and Richard III said or did nothing publicly to stop them. Dissatisfaction with how he had come to the throne grew, especially beyond his power base of supporters in the north. A rebellion seemed likely. When it came, it was led by an unlikely foe – former ally Buckingham.

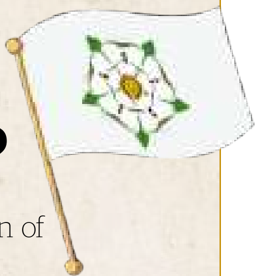
The reasons for Buckingham's volte-face are unclear but he had come under the influence of the persuasive Dr Morton, bishop of Ely. This shrewd politician had served both Edward IV and the previous Lancastrian regime equally well. His counsel appears to have encouraged Buckingham, while Morton had also contacted Margaret Beaufort. She in turn liaised in secret with Edward IV's widow to gain support for putting her son on the throne provided he married the former king's daughter, Princess Elizabeth. Furthermore, Lady Margaret contacted her son in Brittany, urging him to raise an invasion force. Henry Tudor did so,

"The fighting was brutal and close-quartered, halberd and spike hacking and jabbing"

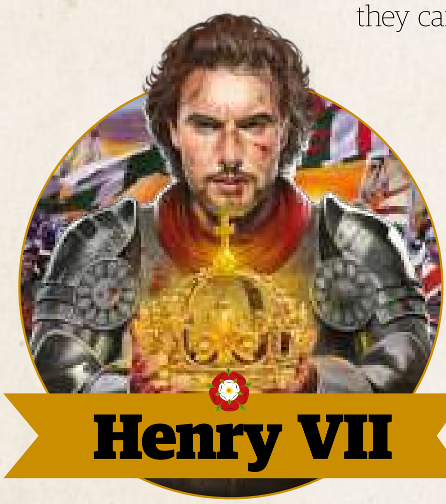


Pembroke Castle, birthplace of Henry Tudor and where he was brought up in the care of his uncle Jasper

Who was the better king?

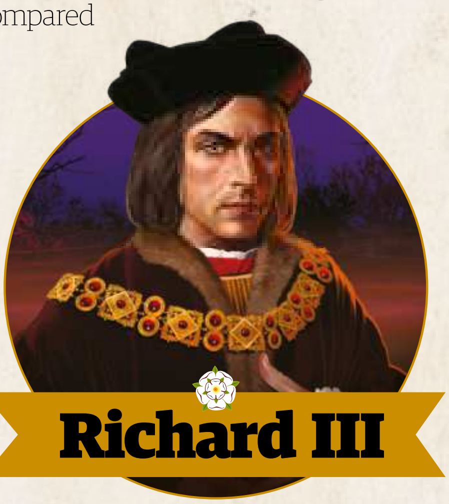


They shared a battlefield at Bosworth and the crown of England, and despite long and short reigns, they can be compared



Henry VII

VS



Richard III

BATTLEFIELD PERFORMANCE

A hardened combat veteran of the Wars of the Roses and in tackling Scottish unrest, Richard's bold but doomed charge at the inexperienced Henry at Bosworth almost carried the day.

●●○○○ ●●●●○

FOREIGN POLICY

While Richard tried and failed to negotiate Henry's return from foreign exile, when king, Henry forged strong treaty alliances abroad that avoided costly wars and helped the economy.

●●●●● ●●○○○

WELFARE & REFORMS

Richard was an able administrator with reformist intentions, though he later had to backtrack for financial reasons. Henry was quite conservative, maintaining much of the previous regime's administration methods.

●●●○○ ●●●○○

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Neither was much loved. Henry, while respected, was equally feared. Disquiet about the fate of the princes and stealing the throne meant Richard was loathed beyond his northern powerbase.

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DYNASTIC RECORD

Attempting to maintain the Plantagenet line, Richard became its last ruler. In contrast, perhaps owing more to luck than judgment, Henry established the next dynasty.

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sailing in early November 1483, but by then Richard III had crushed the poorly co-ordinated rebellion and Buckingham had been beheaded.

Thomas Lord Stanley convinced the king he had no knowledge of his wife's part in the rebellion. Her life was spared, though she was formally placed in her husband's custody, with her titles and possessions passing into his control. It was an error by Richard III for by the time of Henry Tudor's second invasion in 1485, the Stanley family had been communicating with him for some time.

From the Pembrokeshire coast, Tudor's force marched through Wales into England. It gained support along the way, from Welsh troops gathered by his uncle Jasper to important disaffected noble families that were perhaps less for him and more anti the usurper king. However, Richard III had strong backing too from the armies of the duke of Norfolk, the earl of Northumberland and, he'd have thought, Thomas Lord Stanley. Yet if Thomas and his younger brother, Sir William, were going to stay loyal, the king might have expected their armies to intercept Tudor's march. Instead, they played a waiting game. Summoned by the king to his Nottingham base, Thomas Lord Stanley pleaded illness and remained absent, even though his son, Lord Strange, was with the king's court and effectively a hostage against his father's defection.

The two armies converged in the East Midlands, while the troops of the Stanleys' shadowed both but stayed uncommitted. On the morning of 22 August 1485, the inevitable battle began. A definitive narrative of what happened cannot be agreed as contemporary accounts are sparse. Even the battlefield location, long believed to have been at Ambion Hill near Market Bosworth, is now thought to be a mile away at Fenn Lane Farm. Yet it is likely that Tudor's force, by then some 5,000 strong, had the seasoned field commander the earl of Oxford in the vanguard, with support on the flanks, and Henry Tudor himself leading a small mounted force to the rear. Facing them were the duke of Norfolk's men front and centre, with artillery on both flanks, and the king's horsemen in behind. Northumberland's army sat deeper, covering either flank. Richard III had more than twice the men at Tudor's disposal, yet to one side, still uncommitted, were 6,000 Stanley men.

After cannon fire and a rain of arrows, both vanguards slammed into each other. The fighting was brutal and close-quartered, halberd and spike hacking and jabbing against metal-plate armour. The king's superiority of numbers counted for little as Northumberland's men stayed back, never landing a blow. Oxford's men held up well and Norfolk was killed, but Tudor, seeking support, rode towards the Stanley army. Richard III saw both the movement of Tudor's standard and opportunity. It was risky and bold but if his mounted knights swooped to engage Tudor's smaller group, his rival could be eliminated and the day won. The king charged.

The impetus carried the king's men deep into Tudor's retinue. The fighting was desperate, the king hacking and slashing to get to his nemesis. Tudor saw his standard-bearer was cut down. Richard III was getting close – close enough for Tudor to see the circlet crown around his helmet – when suddenly the king's flank came under attack. Sir William Stanley, at last acting, betrayed the king by throwing his lot in with Tudor. It turned the tide. The king, some say yelling "treason, treason!", was separated from his men and unseated. He fought on bravely but was enveloped by Welsh foot soldiers. As he was hacked down and killed, legend has it that the circlet flew from his helmet and was retrieved by Thomas Lord Stanley, who placed it on his stepson's head to proclaim him King Henry VII. Their leader dead, many Yorkist soldiers surrendered, bringing the battle to an end after barely two hours. It wasn't quite the last in the Wars of the Roses, but it proved to be the most decisive one.

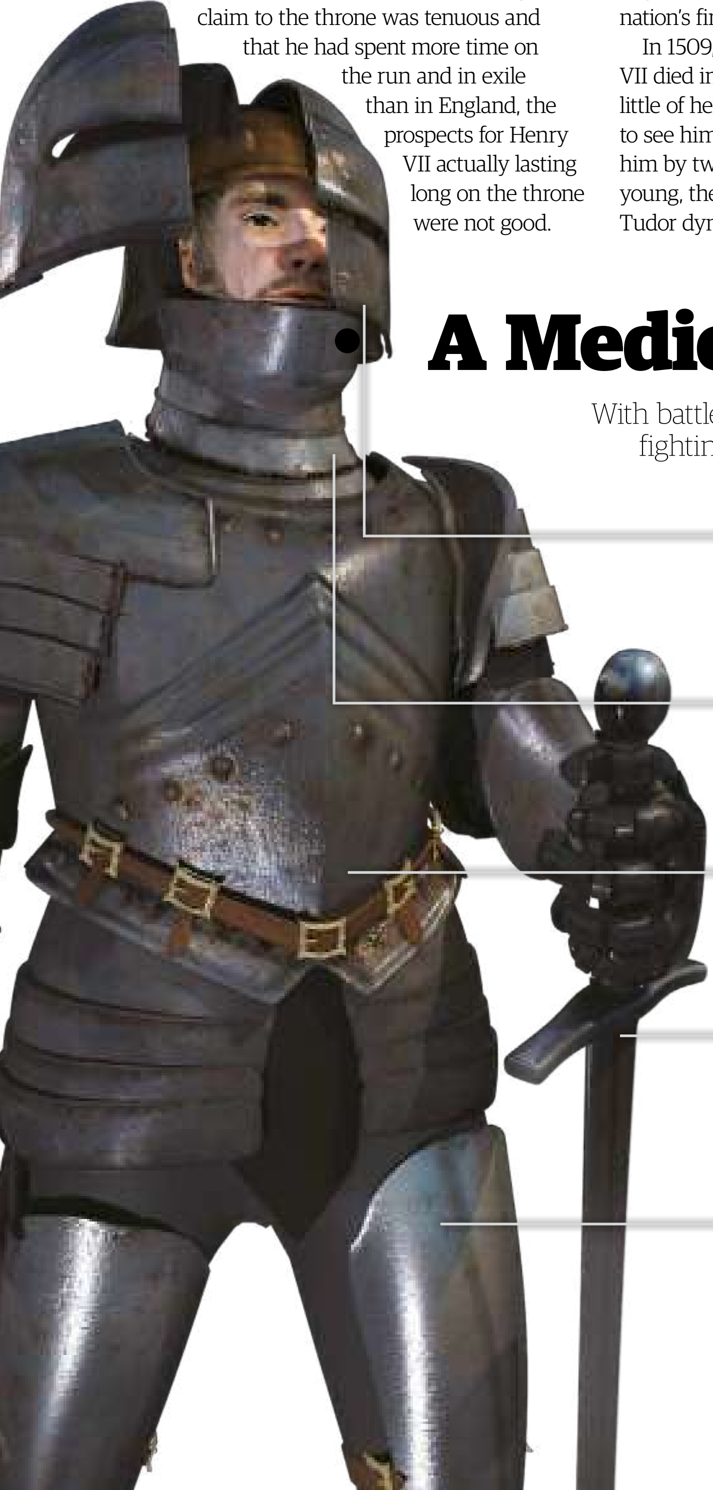
Given the turbulent history of recent previous monarchs, the fact that the new king's claim to the throne was tenuous and that he had spent more time on the run and in exile than in England, the prospects for Henry VII actually lasting long on the throne were not good. Nevertheless, he set about the task. His swift marriage to Princess Elizabeth, uniting the Houses of Lancaster and York through the Tudor name, helped appease Yorkist hostility. An heir, Arthur, was born less than a year after his official coronation, cementing the new king's reign.

Additionally, while Henry VII was ruthless with the leading players who had supported Richard, he left most of the middle-ranking Yorkists alone. This meant the administration of the country continued smoothly. The new king also benefited from the fact that the country was heartily sick of civil strife. When several pretenders to his position emerged, he was able to snuff out rebellions adroitly because the impostors were unable to gather sufficient support. Importantly, Henry VII built strong alliances with other countries, particularly France and Spain. This negated the need for war-funding taxes, allowing the nation's finances to recover.

In 1509, after almost 24 years on the throne, Henry VII died in his bed. Lady Margaret Beaufort, who saw little of her son when he was young but did plenty to see him to the throne, lay him to rest, outliving him by two months. Although Arthur the heir died young, the 'spare' took the crown as Henry VIII. The Tudor dynasty had begun.

A Medieval knight

With battles decided by fierce close-quarters fighting, it was important for a knight to have protection from head to toe



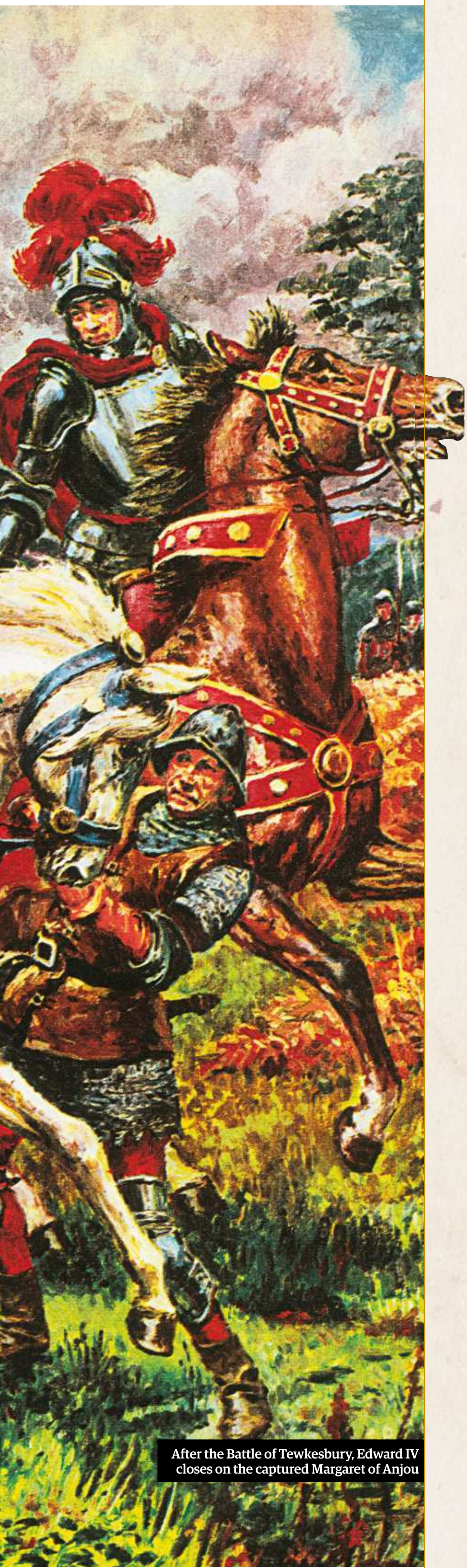
Helmet
Enclosing the wearer's entire head for maximum protection, Medieval helmets often had hinged visors to allow a clear field of vision when necessary.

Gorget
This steel collar protected the front and back of the neck and covered the neck opening in a complete cuirass. It also covered part of the clavicles and sternum.

Heavy armour
The whole suit could have 250 pieces and weigh up to 50 kilograms. The knight could be so heavy that he could barely move, and if he fell from his horse, he would become defenceless.

Sword
With a straight double-edged steel blade, a knight's sword could be between 2.5 and 2.8 feet long and weigh between 1.3 and 1.5 kilograms.

Cuisses
These metal plates protected the thighs, and greaves covered the lower parts of the leg and calves.



After the Battle of Tewkesbury, Edward IV closes on the captured Margaret of Anjou

Richard's wounds

Researchers identified at least 11 injuries on the recently discovered king's skeleton. Some may have been inflicted after death to abuse the body

1. The fatal blows

At the base of the skull, a section of bone has been sliced off by a large, sharp-bladed weapon, like a halberd. There is a second deep penetration hole, perhaps sword created. Either injury would have been fatal.

2. Frontal attack

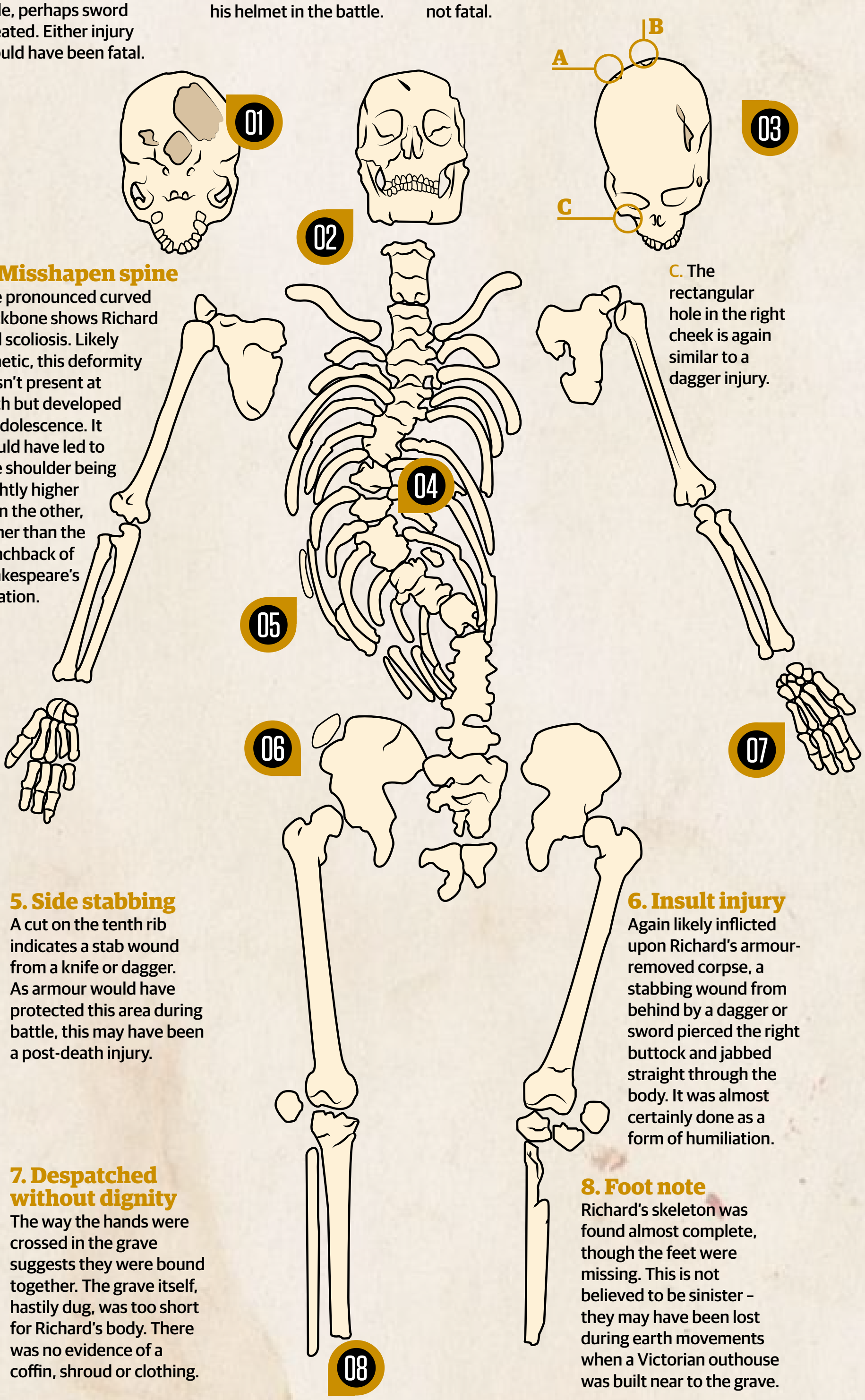
There is a cut mark on the lower jaw, likely a knife injury. This, together with both fatal blows, suggests that Richard had lost his helmet in the battle.

3. Head injuries

A. The top rear of the skull has been clipped several times by a sharp-bladed weapon, such as a sword. Painful blows, though not fatal.

B. A small penetration wound on the skull top, consistent with that of a dagger, was forceful enough to split the bone, pushing small pieces inside.

C. The rectangular hole in the right cheek is again similar to a dagger injury.



4. Misshapen spine

The pronounced curved backbone shows Richard had scoliosis. Likely genetic, this deformity wasn't present at birth but developed in adolescence. It would have led to one shoulder being slightly higher than the other, rather than the hunchback of Shakespeare's creation.

5. Side stabbing

A cut on the tenth rib indicates a stab wound from a knife or dagger. As armour would have protected this area during battle, this may have been a post-death injury.

6. Insult injury

Again likely inflicted upon Richard's armour-removed corpse, a stabbing wound from behind by a dagger or sword pierced the right buttock and jabbed straight through the body. It was almost certainly done as a form of humiliation.

7. Despatched without dignity

The way the hands were crossed in the grave suggests they were bound together. The grave itself, hastily dug, was too short for Richard's body. There was no evidence of a coffin, shroud or clothing.

8. Foot note

Richard's skeleton was found almost complete, though the feet were missing. This is not believed to be sinister – they may have been lost during earth movements when a Victorian outhouse was built near to the grave.

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Purge of the Plantagenets

Amid treachery, treason and scheming plots, the Tudors fought tooth and nail to keep their crown

Written by Jon Wright

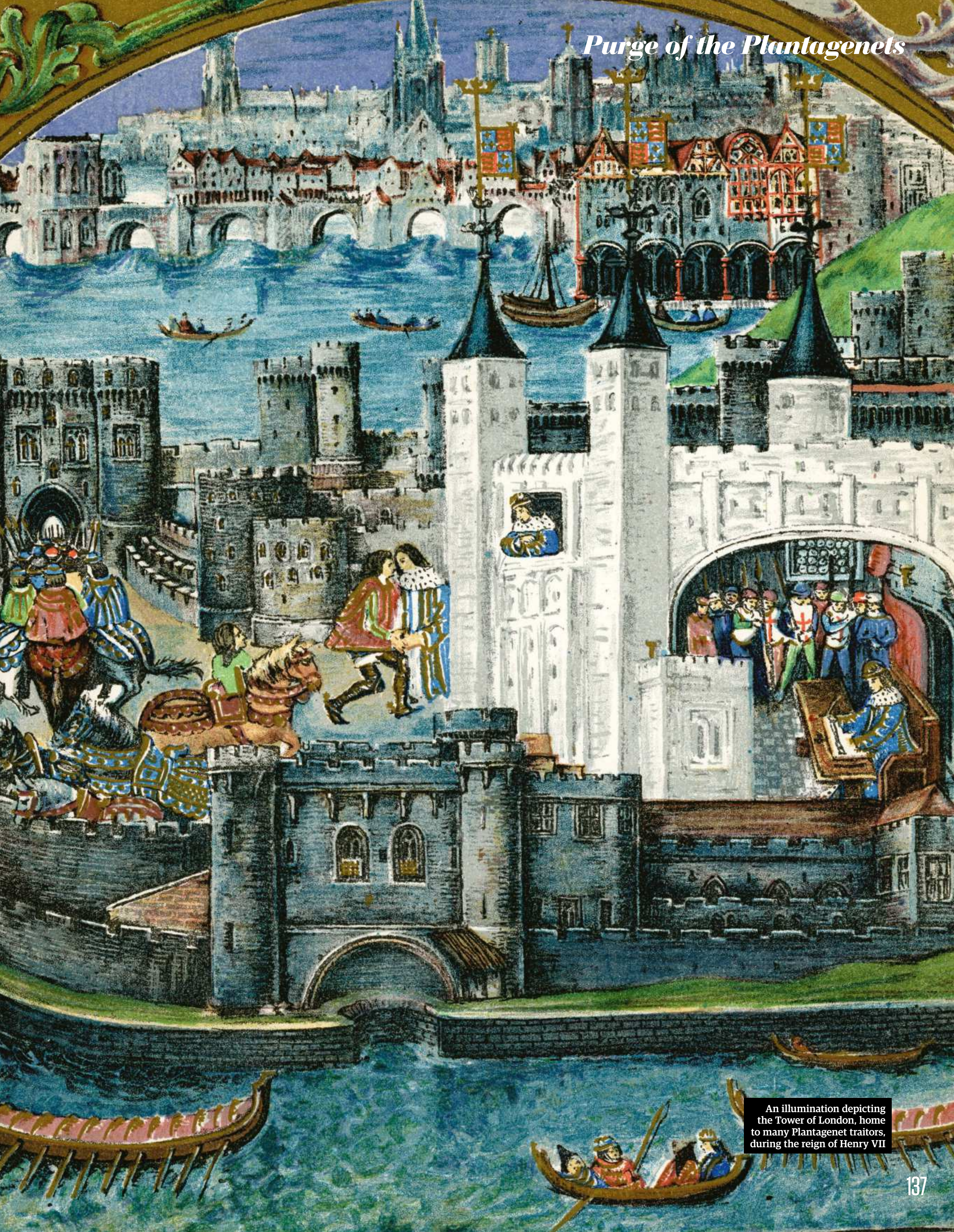
For the Tudor chronicler Edward Hall, Henry VII's accession to the English throne in 1485 had been an unalloyed blessing. "The day was now come," Hall wrote, "that the seed of tumultuous factions and the fountain of civil dissension should be stopped, evacuated and clearly extinguished." Lancastrian victory at Bosworth was swiftly followed by Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV, and two clashing houses "equivalent in riches, fame and honour were brought into one knot and connected together". However, if, for many, "peace was thought to descend out of heaven into England", the first Tudor monarch would also have to confront "the crafty wiles and lurking traps of his secret enemies". Small wonder, then, that from the outset Henry "devised, studied and compassed to extirpate and eradicate all interior seditions".

We are so familiar with the achievements of the Tudor period that it can be hard to grasp just how fragile the new dynasty sometimes was during its first decades. Many sought to revive Yorkist fortunes and Hall, looking back from the relative security of the 1540s, was eager to denounce the culprits. Few figures irked Hall more than Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV. According to Hall's account, she had been "inflamed with malice and diabolical instinction had invented and practised all mischiefs, displeasures and damages that she could devise against the king of England, and wrought all the ways possible how to suck his blood and compass his destruction". As we shall see, Margaret was not alone in her desire to undermine and preferably snuff out the fledgling Tudor dynasty. But how was this goal to be achieved?

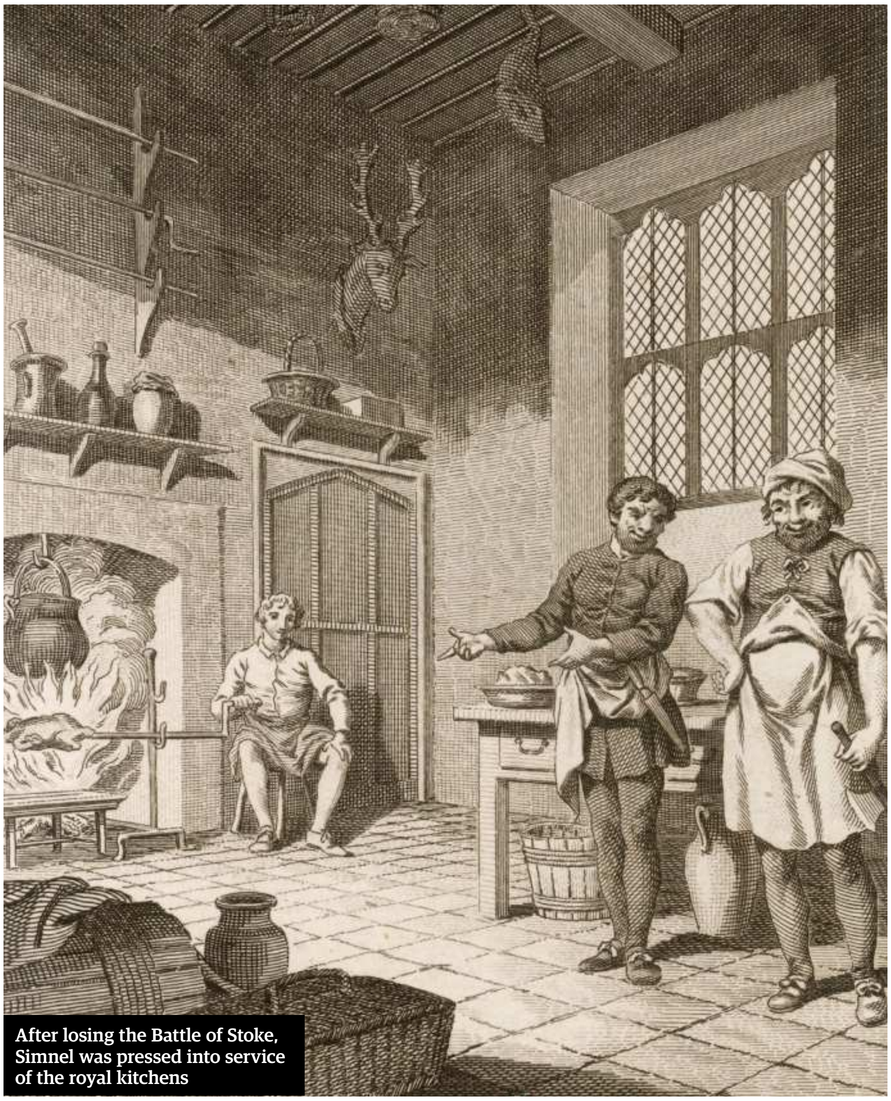
It is often suggested that Henry VII's claim to the English throne was tenuous. This is rather harsh. Through his mother, Margaret Beaufort, Henry was directly descended from John of Gaunt, the son of Edward III – a slightly remote but still meaningful royal pedigree. Others had equal or more enticing claims, however, and they served as convenient foci for the rebellious machinations that plagued Henry's reign.

Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick, was the son of the duke of Clarence and, as such, the nephew of both Edward IV and Richard III. He naturally headed many Yorkist lists of alternatives to Henry VII. Early in his reign, Henry moved the ten-year-old Warwick from Sheriff Hutton in Yorkshire to the Tower of London. Though Warwick was always safely under lock and key, rumours of his escape were apt to surface, while others suggested that Warwick's father had swapped him in the cradle with another infant – perhaps the true Warwick was still at large.

Groundless as all this was, speculation allowed one Lambert Simnel to be passed off, with a modicum of feasibility, as the young Warwick. The origins of the deception are complex. The disgruntled priest Richard Simonds is often positioned as a



An illumination depicting the Tower of London, home to many Plantagenet traitors, during the reign of Henry VII



After losing the Battle of Stoke, Simnel was pressed into service of the royal kitchens

leading figure, but the enterprise was simply too well managed to be the brainchild of a single maverick cleric. In any event, the ruse went down particularly well in Ireland, which was always a hotbed of Yorkist sympathy, and figures as lofty as Thomas Fitzgerald, Ireland's chancellor, and Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, rallied to Simnel's cause.

Back in London, strenuous efforts were made to expose Simnel as a counterfeit. In February 1487, the real Warwick was led from the Tower and paraded "throughout all the principal streets… to be seen by the people". He was "conducted to St Paul's Church in solemn procession… And it was provided also in good fashion that divers of the nobility and others of quality (especially of those that the king most suspected, and knew the person of Plantagenet best) had communication with the young gentleman by the way". The ploy worked well: "With the subjects here, at least with so many as out of error, and not out of malice, might be misled." Not so in Ireland, where the charade went from strength to strength. By May 1487, Simnel was crowned in Dublin as Edward VI.

Margaret of Burgundy had heartily welcomed Simnel during his brief visit to the Low Countries in early 1487 and before too long, troops (mostly German mercenaries) were on their way to Ireland. By this stage, two disenchanted English nobles had taken up leading roles in the Simnel affair - Viscount Lovell, fresh from provoking an earlier rebellion against Henry, and the earl of Lincoln, a man once touted as the rightful successor to Richard III. An army crossed the Irish Sea in June to land at Furness, Lancashire. It traversed the Pennines into Yorkshire and then headed south. Henry VII was well prepared and at the Battle of Stoke on 16 June, secured a convincing victory. Lincoln perished on the battlefield, Lovell most likely fled to Scotland, and the boy Simnel, a pawn who deserved little blame for what had happened, is said to have been pressed into service in the royal kitchens. Clemency had, in fact, played a significant role throughout the whole Simnel shambles, with Henry routinely offering pardons in order to divide his opponents. As new, more urgent challenges arose, however, Henry's indulgence would show its limits.

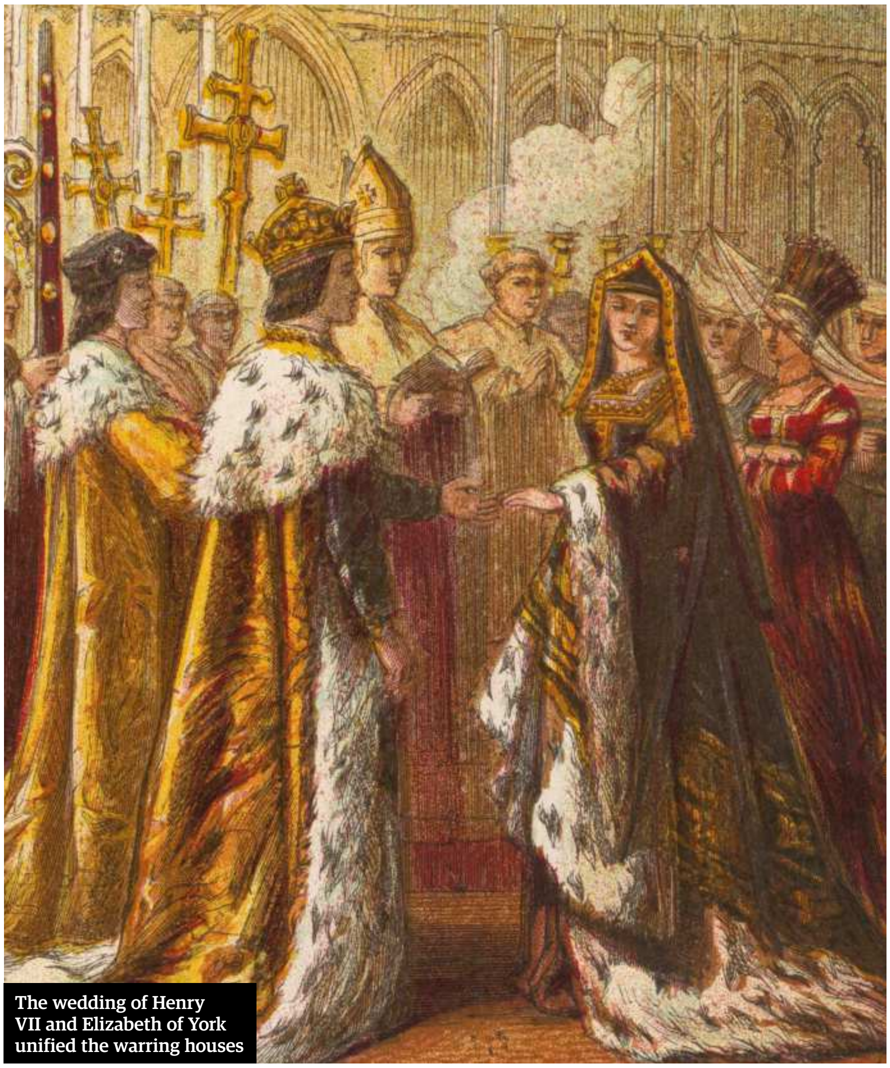
"Clemency had, in fact, played a significant role throughout the whole Simnel shambles"

If Warwick was an excellent vehicle for Yorkist designs, then a son of Edward IV would have been even more potent. The famous Princes in the Tower had, in all likelihood, been done away with before Henry came to the throne but, again, facts were unable to stymie fantasies. In December 1491, Perkin Warbeck, a native of Tournai, fetched up at Cork during a business trip with his employer, a Breton silk merchant.

The precise details of how a plot was concocted are hazy but Yorkist loyalists, with John Taylor in the vanguard, convinced Warbeck to pose as Edward's son, Richard. An alarming number of Henry's overseas rivals rushed to recognise Warbeck as a putative Richard IV. It was impossible to be sure of what had happened to Edward IV's sons but authenticity appears to have mattered far less than the opportunity to disrupt Henry VII's rule. By March 1492, Charles VIII was welcoming Warbeck to France. When he crossed into the Low Countries, Margaret of Burgundy acknowledged him as Richard, her beloved nephew. Warbeck even made it as far as Vienna, where he was feted by Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I.

The Warbeck cause also gained traction at the heart of the English political establishment, even denting the former loyalty of the chamberlain of the king's household, Sir William Stanley, who was beheaded on Tower Hill in February 1495. The threat was far more perilous than had been the case with the Simnel misadventure and history may have turned out very differently if an invading army had landed successfully in Kent in July 1495. As it was, chaos descended on the beaches and Warbeck made good his escape. After stopping off at the siege of Waterford in western Ireland, Warbeck travelled on to Scotland where another monarch, James IV, showered him with favours. An estimable marriage was arranged between Warbeck and Lady Katherine Gordon, with Warbeck and the king jousting together during the marital celebrations, and by September 1496, the two men were leading an army over the border into England. This too came to nothing but Warbeck could not be faulted for his resilience.

He travelled, via Ireland, to the West Country where the locals had been rebelling against Henry VII's financial policies since May 1497. After being routed at Blackheath on their march to London,


The wedding of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York unified the warring houses

many of them were drawn to Warbeck's banner and, while a siege of Exeter proved unsuccessful, this had been a truly hazardous few years for the fledgling Tudor regime. Warbeck realised that his stock of stratagems was now exhausted, however, and after taking temporary sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire, he surrendered on the guarantee that he would not be killed.

Henry VII was unable to keep that promise. Warbeck was eventually consigned to the Tower of London: the home, as we've seen, of the earl of Warwick. The danger posed by Clarence's son had not vanished. On Shrove Tuesday 1499, Ralph Wilford was hanged on Old Kent Road. This son of a cordwainer in Bishopsgate Street had, like Simnel before him, posed as Warwick. The earl was clearly still a magnet for Yorkist discontent and, in addition, it was assumed that he was instinctively sympathetic to Warbeck's cause. A plot to free both Warwick and Warbeck from the Tower was launched and Henry VII's patience came to an abrupt end. Perkin was hanged at Tyburn on 23 November 1499 while Warwick was executed at Tower Hill five days later.

Warwick, possessed of huge symbolic power and a regular obstacle to Henry VII's broader diplomatic and dynastic goals, proved the point that, as Thomas Gainsford later put it, Henry's reign "was a dangerous time for any Plantagenet to live in". Gainsford was quick to add, of course, that by killing Warwick, "there was nothing done but by orderly proceedings and justifiable causes." Henry, in pursuit of "the sedation of all troubles, both present and to come... had struck off his head and with him the head of all division and dissension". Given the persistence of the Yorkist cause over the coming decades, this would prove to be wildly optimistic.

As for the Perkin Warbeck rebellion, Edward Hall reported that through the 1490s "no man was quiet in his own mind, but his brains and senses daily laboured... about this great and weighty matter". The memory certainly weighed heavily on Henry VII

The diabolical duchess

One woman was a driving force behind the Yorkist attempts to oust Henry from the throne

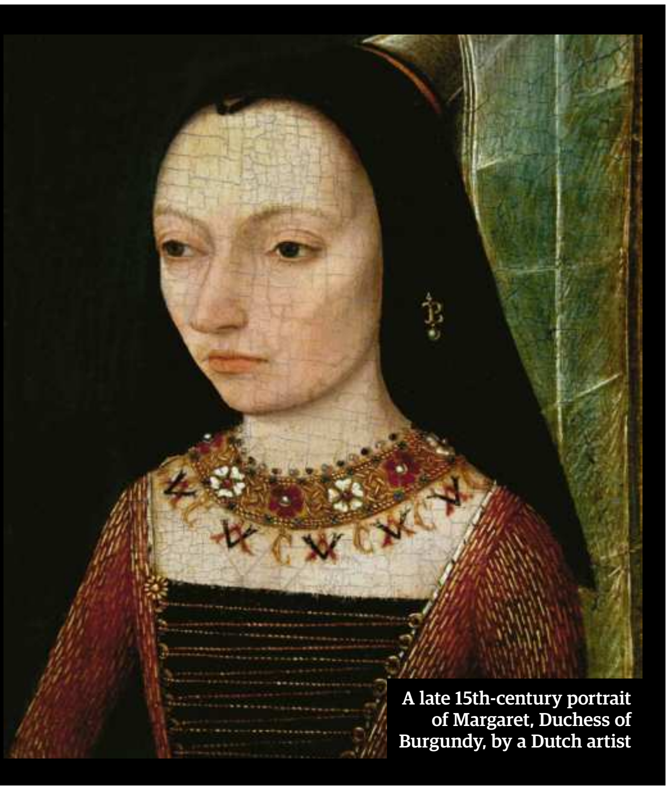
The image of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, as an inveterate plotter against Henry VII would be sustained throughout the Tudor era and beyond. Early in the 17th century, Thomas Gainsford more than matched the venomous tone of Edward Hall.

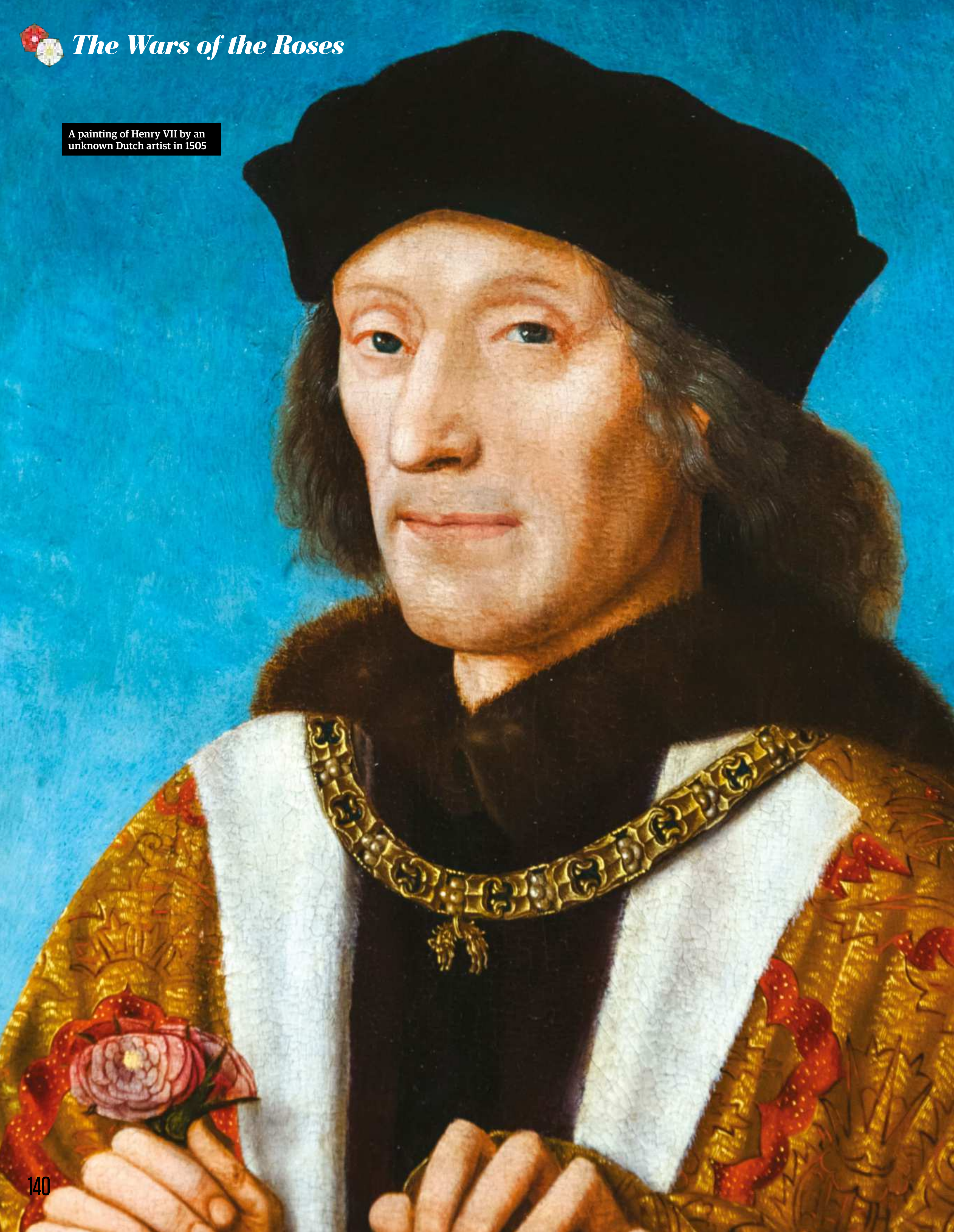
Margaret, Gainsford wrote, had been bitterly disappointed by the failure of the Lambert Simnel imposture, but then "studied night and day upon further and further instigations; yet, hovered over opportunity like a hawk for her pray, to torment and trouble the peace of England: embracing every strange and prestigious illusion, and not caring with what pullies of ridiculous and impossible actions her malice and revenges were wound up." She was, in Gainsford's view, determined to bring down King Henry VII, "whom she cursed on her knees, and hated, even beyond the tenderness of her sex."

For all the hyperbole of such accounts, Margaret profoundly disapproved of Henry's rule and seems to have played an important role in both the Simnel and Warbeck episodes. The troops who sailed to Ireland in support of Warbeck were paid for out of Margaret's coffers, and she may well have believed that Warbeck was her nephew Richard. She said as much in a letter to her confidante Isabella of Castile in August 1492.

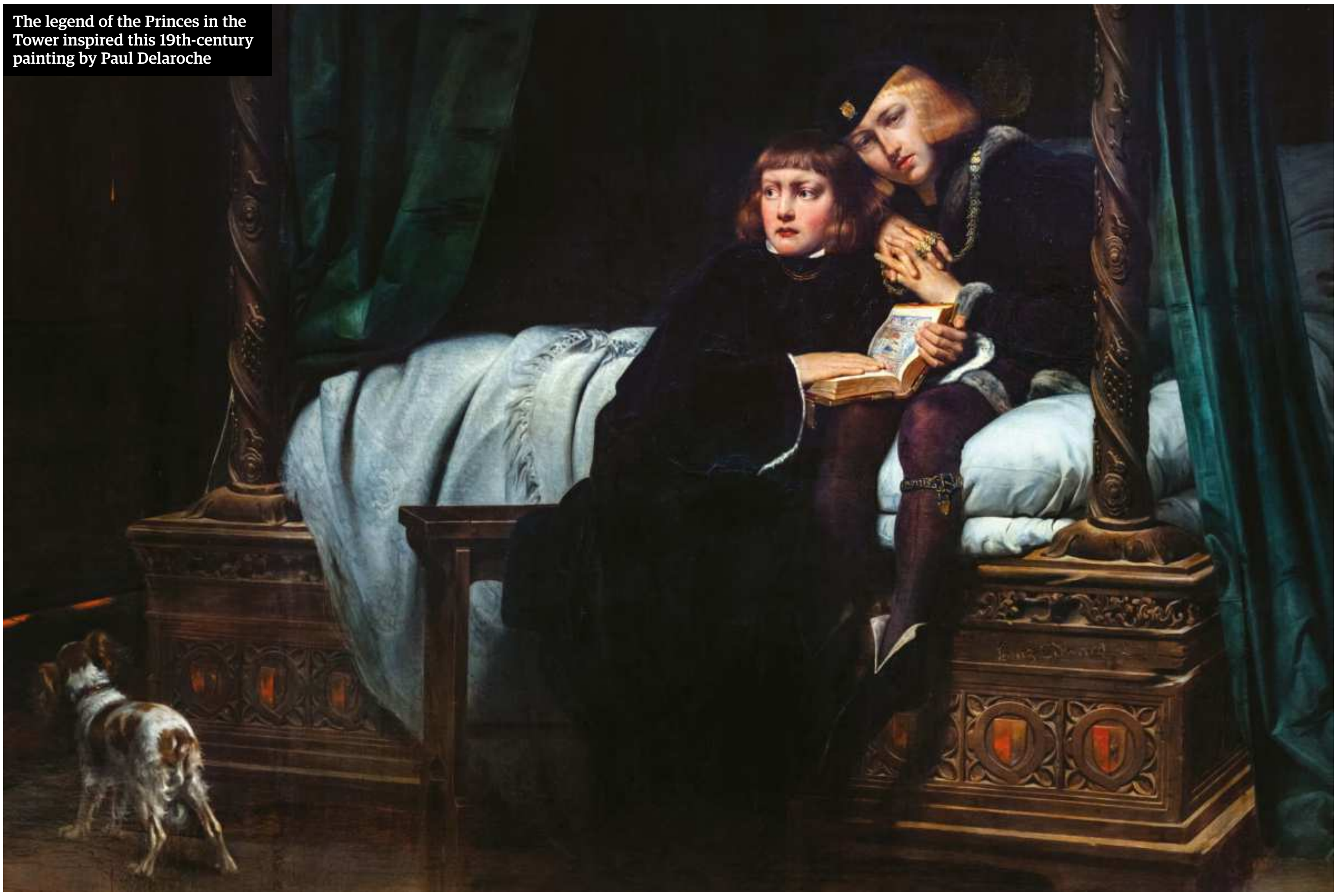
There was more to Margaret, however, than the Yorkist matriarch whose court attracted so many English exiles with an animus against the Tudors. Married to Charles, Count of Charolais, in 1468, Margaret proved to be a woman of profound religious devotion and keen intellectual instincts supporting the emerging printing revolution with gusto.

Her last visit to England would be in 1480 and, while she refused to acknowledge Henry VII's accession five years later, a belated if grudging peace was made between the two in 1498. This was doubtless more the result of diplomatic necessity than a genuine volte face in favour of the Tudors. Margaret was Yorkist to the core.

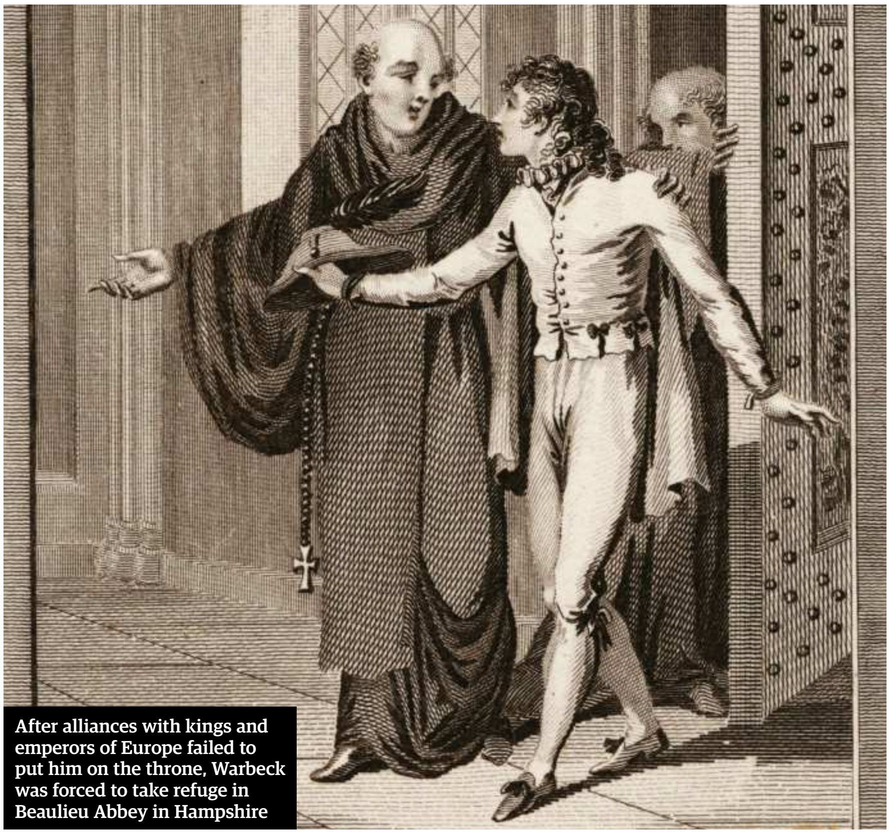

A late 15th-century portrait of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, by a Dutch artist



A painting of Henry VII by an unknown Dutch artist in 1505



The legend of the Princes in the Tower inspired this 19th-century painting by Paul Delaroche



After alliances with kings and emperors of Europe failed to put him on the throne, Warbeck was forced to take refuge in Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire

and, for the rest of his reign, heading off further challenges to his legitimacy would become something of an obsession. Espionage networks, comparable to anything later masterminded by Elizabeth I, were erected; diplomatic treaties included clauses against harbouring traitors; and Henry paid small fortunes in 'loans', more accurately understood as bribes, to overseas rulers. For all this, no respite arrived for Henry following the deaths of Warbeck and Warwick. The regime's stability suffered badly with the death of Henry's son, Arthur, in 1502 and, by that date, another branch of the Plantagenets had begun to make mischief. This time, suspicion fell on the descendants of Elizabeth, another sister of Edward IV and the wife of John de la Pole.

We have already seen one of this couple's sons, the earl of Lincoln, entering the ranks for Lambert Simnel during the 1480s, but by the turn of the 16th century, his brother Edmund, Earl of Suffolk, had taken centre stage. Edmund's relationship with Henry VII had always been strained but he had made significant shows of loyalty, helping to combat the West Country rebels in 1497. A temporary defection and unlicensed overseas trip, related to Edmund's involvement in a murder, had caused alarm but all appeared to be set fair upon his return. Then in August 1501, he once more crossed the Channel in the company of his brother Richard and his sense of a rightful claim to the English crown could no longer be subdued.

Having secured the support of the emperor Maximilian, Edmund was at Aachen by the end of the year, planning an invasion of England and, while this failed to materialise, his friends and allies at home would soon feel Henry VII's wrath. Attainders were issued, prison cells filled up and one of Edmund's closest associates, Sir James Tyrell, was executed. The crucial backing of the Emperor Maximilian evaporated so at Easter 1504, Edmund left Aachen and was captured by the duke of Gueldres on his way to Friesland. Edmund came into the custody of Philip of Burgundy and circumstances conspired to allow Henry VII to secure de la Pole as a prisoner. By this stage, Edmund's taste for rebellion had soured and by April 1506, he was in the Tower. Once more, Henry VII had provided guarantees that a rebel's life would be spared but this promise would not be kept by Henry's successor.

> "By this stage, Edmund's taste for rebellion had soured and by April 1506, he was in the Tower"

The image of Henry VII uniting the realm's warring factions is not without merit. The king, while "infinitely suspicious", as Francis Bacon later put it, did not go out of his way to antagonise Yorkist sympathisers and former enemies. It was entirely possible to have fought against Henry at Bosworth and then, after demonstrating suitable fidelity, to pursue a glittering career at the early Tudor court. As for those who rose up against Henry, Bacon concluded that "there was never so great rebellions expiated with so little blood" but this adjudication was overly charitable. It would certainly have surprised the dozens of men killed after the abortive Kentish landing in 1495 or in the wake of the West County rebellion. However, Henry was not in the habit of executing on a whim and the death toll of leading participants in the major crises might well have been higher.

When Henry VIII came to the throne in 1509, the Yorkist threat was still all too tangible, which brings us back to the de la Pole brothers. Through the final years of Henry VII's reign, Richard de la Pole proved to be an enduring nuisance, hatching plans to invade England from Scotland, rallying support among the great and good of Italy and travelling as far as Buda to consult with Ladislaus VI. Treason was clearly on Richard's mind but all earlier misdemeanours were surpassed when, early in the next reign, he began to fight for French King Louis XII against the English. It was at this juncture that Henry VIII ordered the execution of Richard's brother Edmund in May 1513. Richard's response was to openly proclaim his supposed claim to the English throne and he would spend the next decade thinking up treacherous dreams. None were realised and Richard died at the Battle of Pavia in 1525.

The prospects of a meaningful Yorkist challenge to the Tudor rule were now increasingly remote, but there were still sufficient Plantagenet relations about the place, and more than enough grumblings against Henry VIII to keep him on high alert. But the victims of this continuing climate of surveillance did not always deserve their unhappy fates. Margaret Pole was the sister of the earl of Warwick and took her surname from her husband, Sir Richard Pole - not to be confused with the ill-starred Richard de la Pole. Despite her family's turbulent past, Margaret, now a widow, returned to royal favour under Henry VIII, regaining the lands of the earldom of Salisbury in 1512. Her support for Catherine of Aragon and her daughter Mary did not

The web of spies

The king went to great lengths to protect his throne

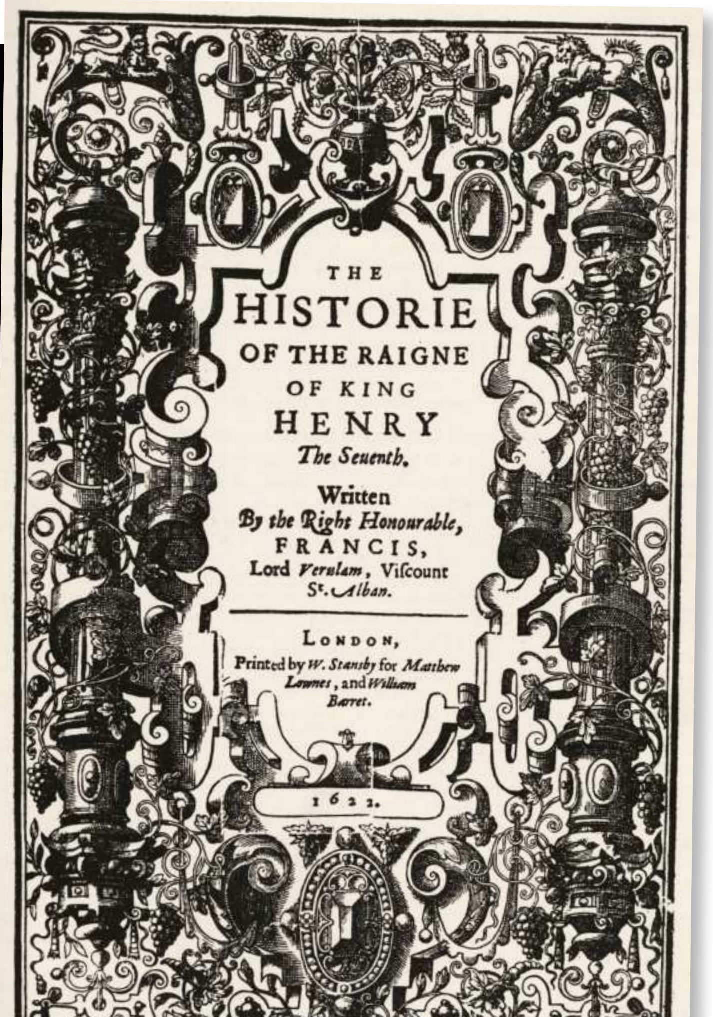
We are very familiar with the intricate and penetrative espionage networks established by Elizabeth I, but they had an early Tudor precedent. Faced with so many challenges to his rule, Henry VII not only went to great lengths to preserve his personal security – employing well-armed bodyguards, for instance – but also worked hard to acquire information on his potential rivals.

Francis Bacon's account of the reign, published in the 1620s and highly influential for the next two and a half centuries, portrayed a monarch constantly on high alert. "He was careful and liberal," Bacon wrote, "to obtain good intelligence from all parts abroad." Whether recruiting travellers, Englishmen resident abroad or ambassadors, "his instructions were ever extreme, curious and articulate."

Murkier methods were also at Henry's disposal, notably the "secret spials [spies], which he did employ both at home and abroad by them to discover what practices and conspiracies were against him." Henry, Bacon explained, "had such moles perpetually working and casting" and this was certainly not to "be reprehended. For if spials be lawful against lawful enemies, much more against conspirators and traitors."

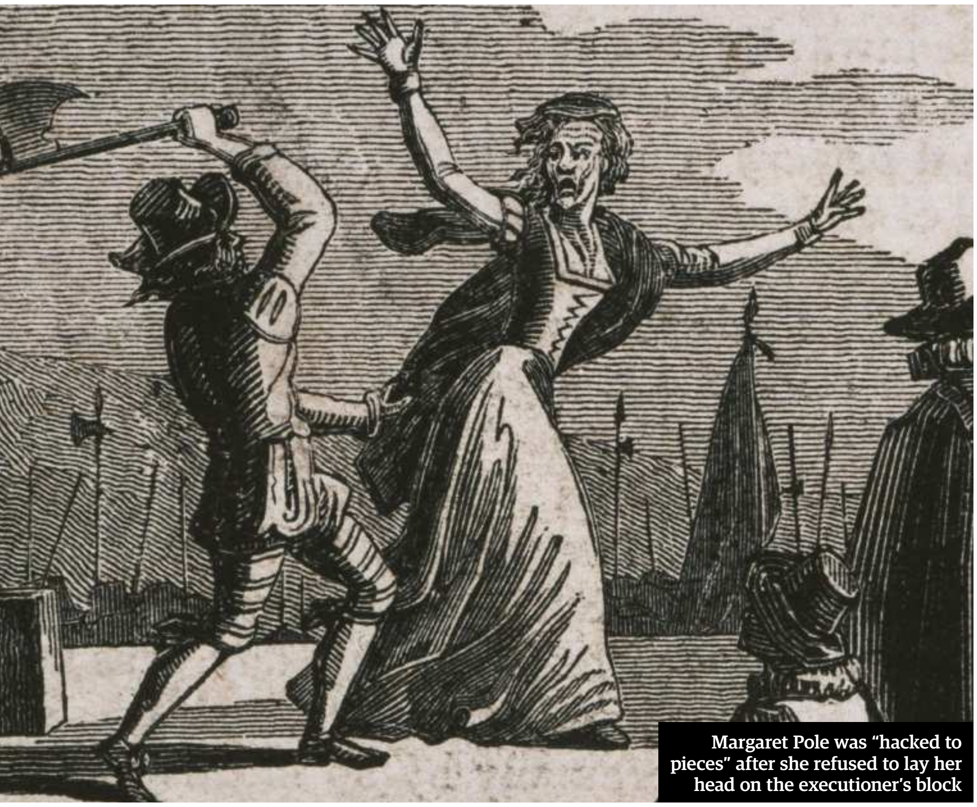
Bacon was confident that Henry's strategies paid dividends: "Surely there was this further good in his employing of these flies and familiars that as the use of them was cause that many conspiracies were revealed, so the fame and suspicion of them kept (no doubt) many conspiracies from being attempted." The difficulty for the historian has always been to pin down precisely who was recruited as one of Henry's spies.

During the machinations of Edmund de la Pole in the first decade of the 16th century, a number of agents infiltrated his ranks on the continent. But with some figures, it is difficult to reach definitive conclusions about where their loyalty lay. Was Sir Robert Curzon a true supporter of Edmund who genuinely fled to Flanders when all the plots came to nought? Or had he been loyal to Henry all along who simply played the conspirator in order to gather intelligence?



THE
HISTORIE
OF THE RAIGNE
OF KING
HENRY
The Seuenth.
Written
By the Right Honourable,
FRANCIS,
Lord Verulam, Viſcount
St. Alban.

LONDON,
Printed by W. Stansby for Matthew
Lownes, and William
Barret.
1622.



Margaret Pole was "hacked to pieces" after she refused to lay her head on the executioner's block

A young Henry VIII formed an elaborate network of spies in order to preserve and protect his reign

sit well with the Henrician regime, however, and neither did the antics of her sons.

Reginald Pole, once a keen supporter of Henry's divorce from Catherine, spent much of the 1530s denouncing the newly minted royal supremacy over the English Church, bemoaning the break with Rome and stirring up agitation among Henry's critics at home and abroad. His tract against the supremacy, *De Unitate*, caused uproar and Margaret's lacklustre scolding of her son (she only went so far as describing the work as "a folly") did not impress Henry and his ministers. Reginald was on the continent, carving out an impressive clerical career, but this did not deter Henry from approving various assassination attempts against him.

In England, Henry Pole, Lord Montagu, was distressed by his brother Reginald's actions and had long demonstrated loyalty to the king. Regrettably, he was tarred through association and he had also grown close to other Plantagenet notables - including Henry Courtenay, Marquess of Exeter - who were suspected of harbouring sinister intentions. Accusations from another Pole brother, Geoffrey, added to the combustible mix and in January 1539, Henry Pole and Courtenay were executed: their supposed crimes included wanting the king dead. The times being what they were, Margaret Pole would also face Henry's ire, though it is far from clear what she was guilty of as the indictment insisted "detestable and abominable treasons". On 27 May 1541, the 67-year-old was killed at the Tower of London by "a wretched and blundering youth" who "hacked her head and shoulders to pieces in the most pitiful manner".

Future manoeuvrings by those of Yorkist blood or sympathy were not destined to rise above the level of farce. By Mary Tudor's reign, it was left to the benighted Thomas Stafford to carry forward a lost cause. Two of his grandparents, the aforementioned Margaret Pole and the third duke of Buckingham, had been executed for treason and Stafford kept up the family tradition. His entire enterprise was really rather pitiful, however, with a lowlight being the rather pointless seizure of Scarborough Castle in April 1557. It is hard to know whether Stafford genuinely thought he had a legitimate claim to the throne or was simply unhinged.

If the Yorkist menace was all but extinct, however, the Tudors would never lack for rivals and ill-wishers. The chaotic events surrounding Lady Jane Grey's short tenure on the throne were not soon forgotten and the very existence of Mary, Queen of Scots, made it abundantly clear that alternative dynastic trajectories could still excite passions during Elizabeth's reign.

In 1581, Anthony Munday published a timely book with a telling title: *A Watch-Woorde to Englande to Beware of Traytours and Tretcherous Practices*. Treason, Munday wrote, was "of all other things... most odious in the sight of God" and the first part of his book provided a detailed account of how English monarchs had always dealt with turbulent subjects, the likes of Perkin Warbeck and the earl of Warwick among them.

As always, there was huge propagandist advantage to be derived from blackening reputations, but Munday was aiming for more than a history lesson. "Perhaps," he chided his readers, "thou wilt say these things are done and past, and they were but a certain few that thus have offended, and being justly scourged for their misdemeanours they are now quite worn out of remembrance."

In fact, Munday warned, it would be a colossal mistake to "blindly overthrow thyself in conceit." The threats were different now but, as every Elizabethan knew, they were still real enough and, as always, could stem from the heart of the body commonwealth. "All these evil imps have been of thine own breeding," Munday barked. "Thou hast fostered such children, as have pierced into thy bowels, shaken all thy sinews, yea, and almost have wrung the very marrow out of thy joints." Such words still resonated in the fractious political world of Tudor England.

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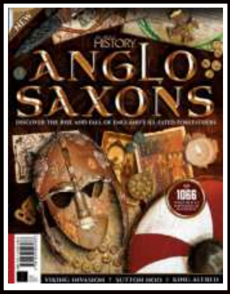
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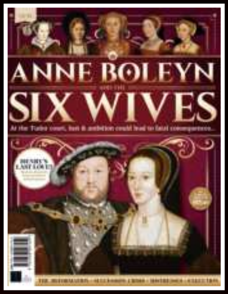
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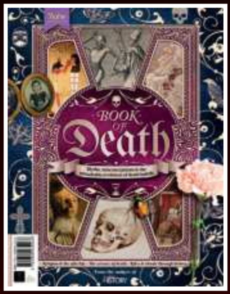
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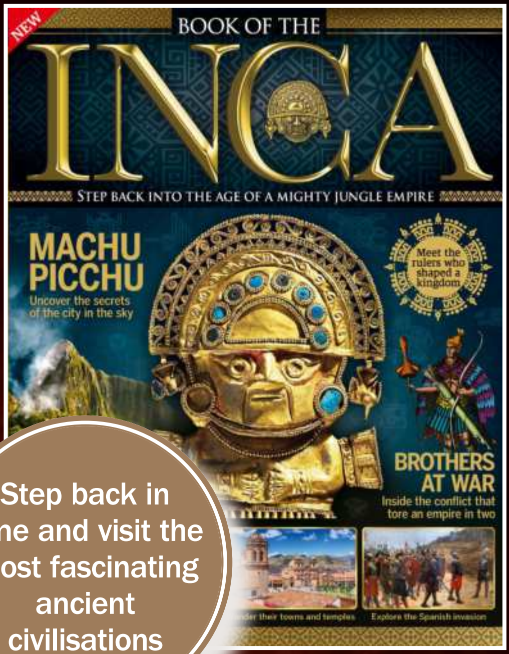
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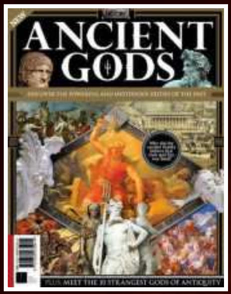
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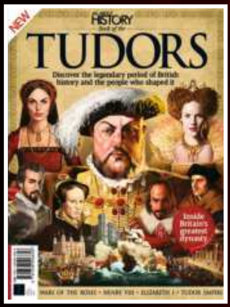
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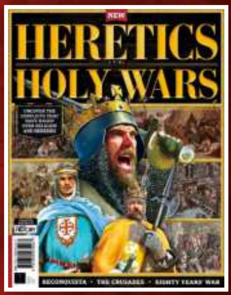
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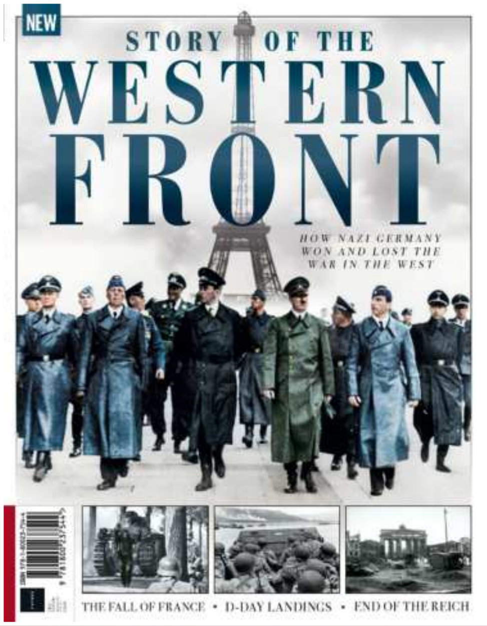
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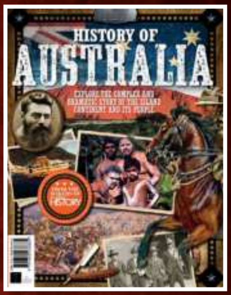
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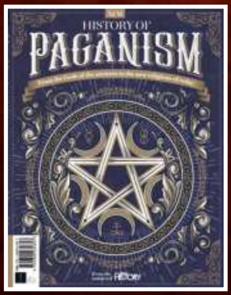
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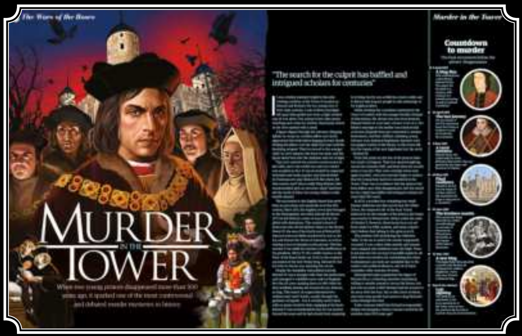
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